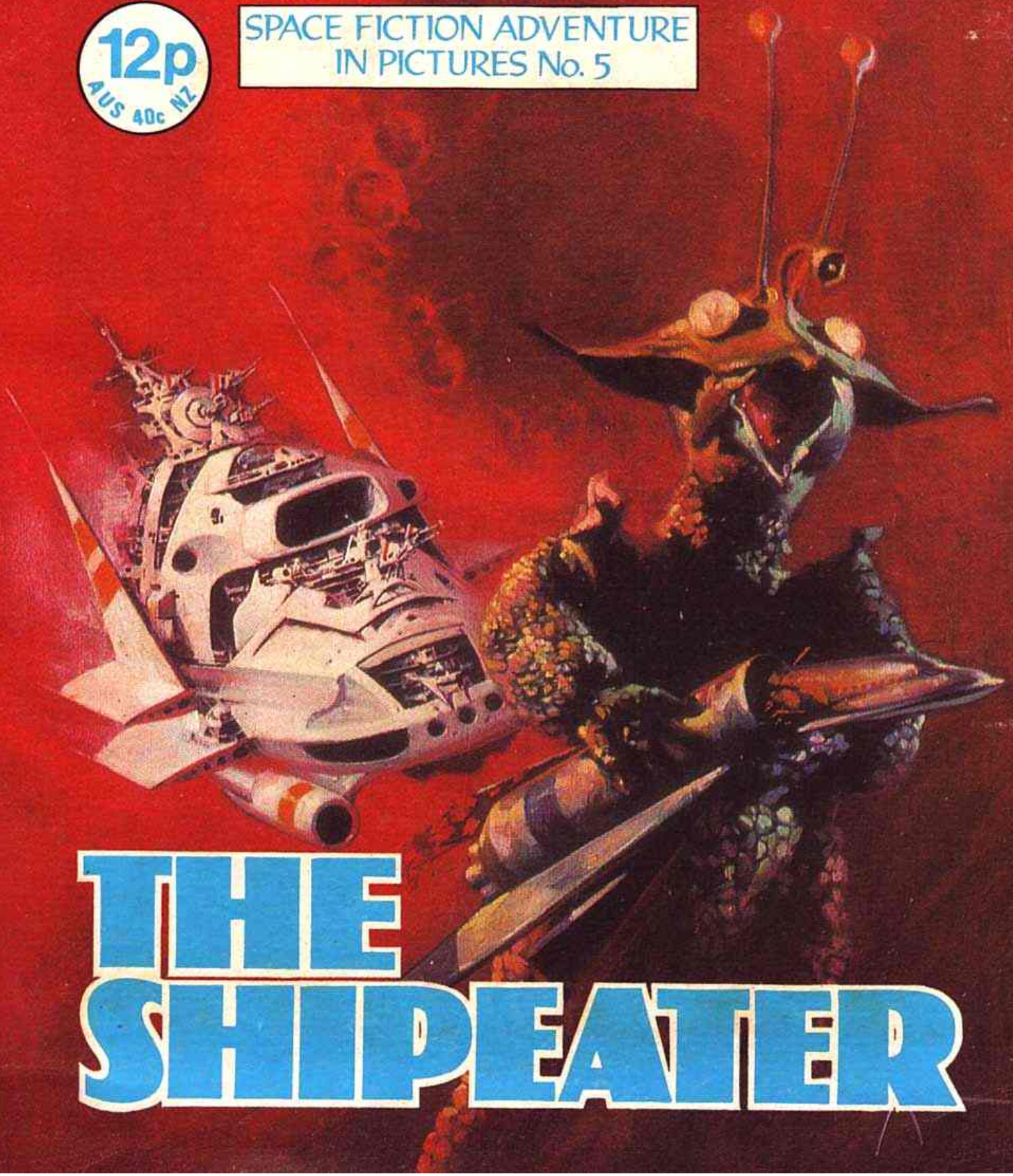
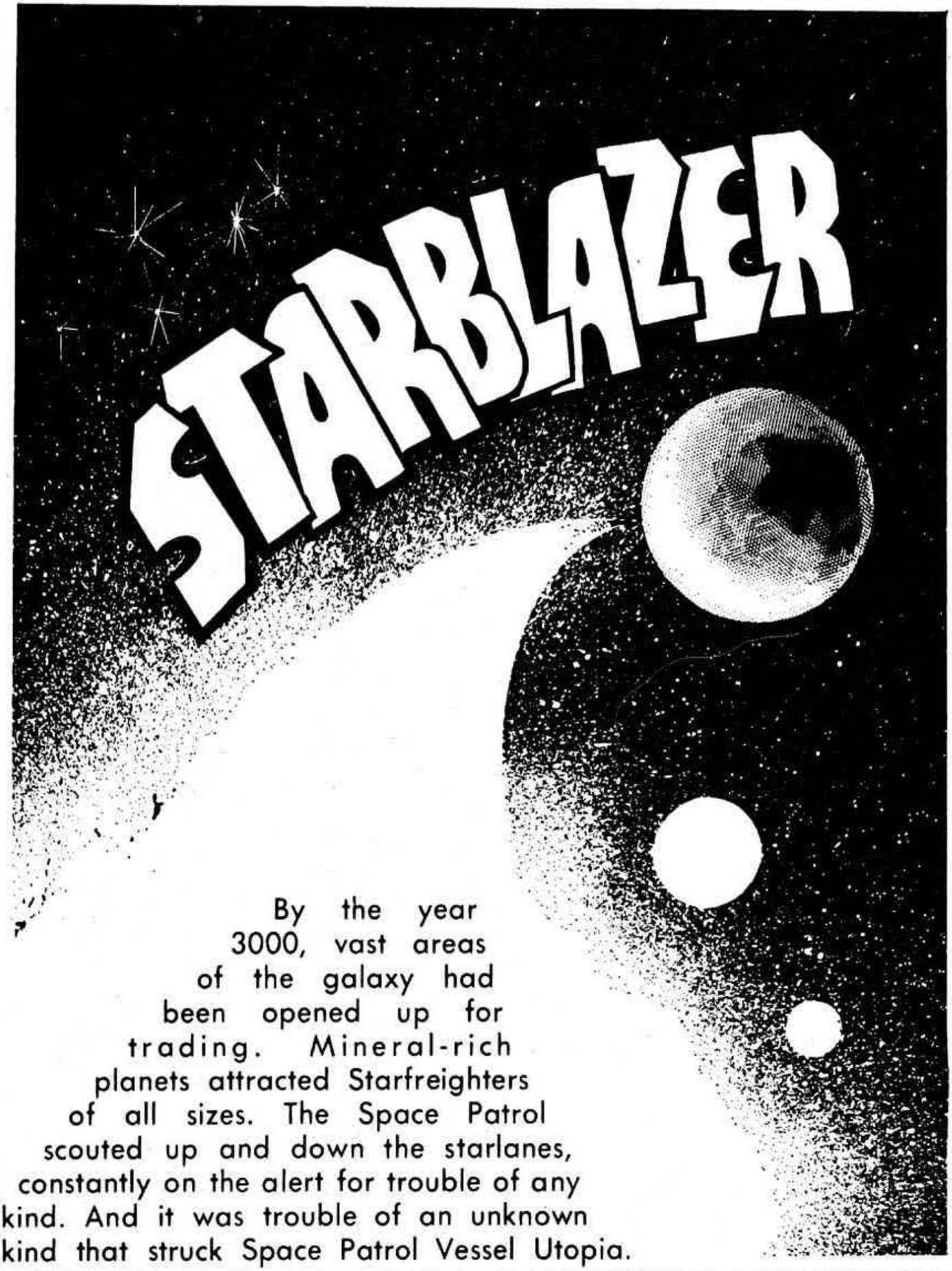
STARBLAZER

12p
AUS 40c NZ

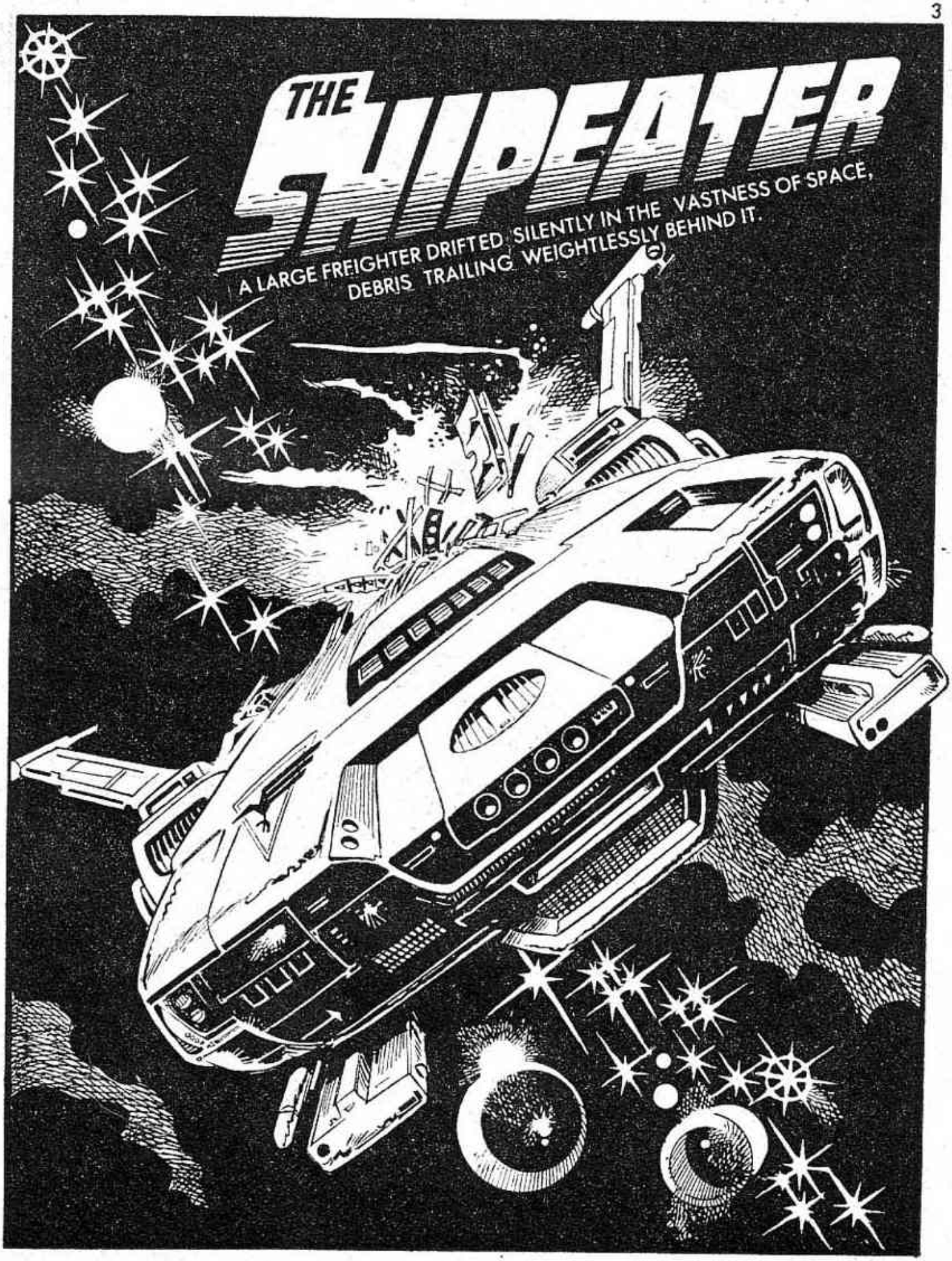
SPACE FICTION ADVENTURE
IN PICTURES No. 5



THE SHIPEATER

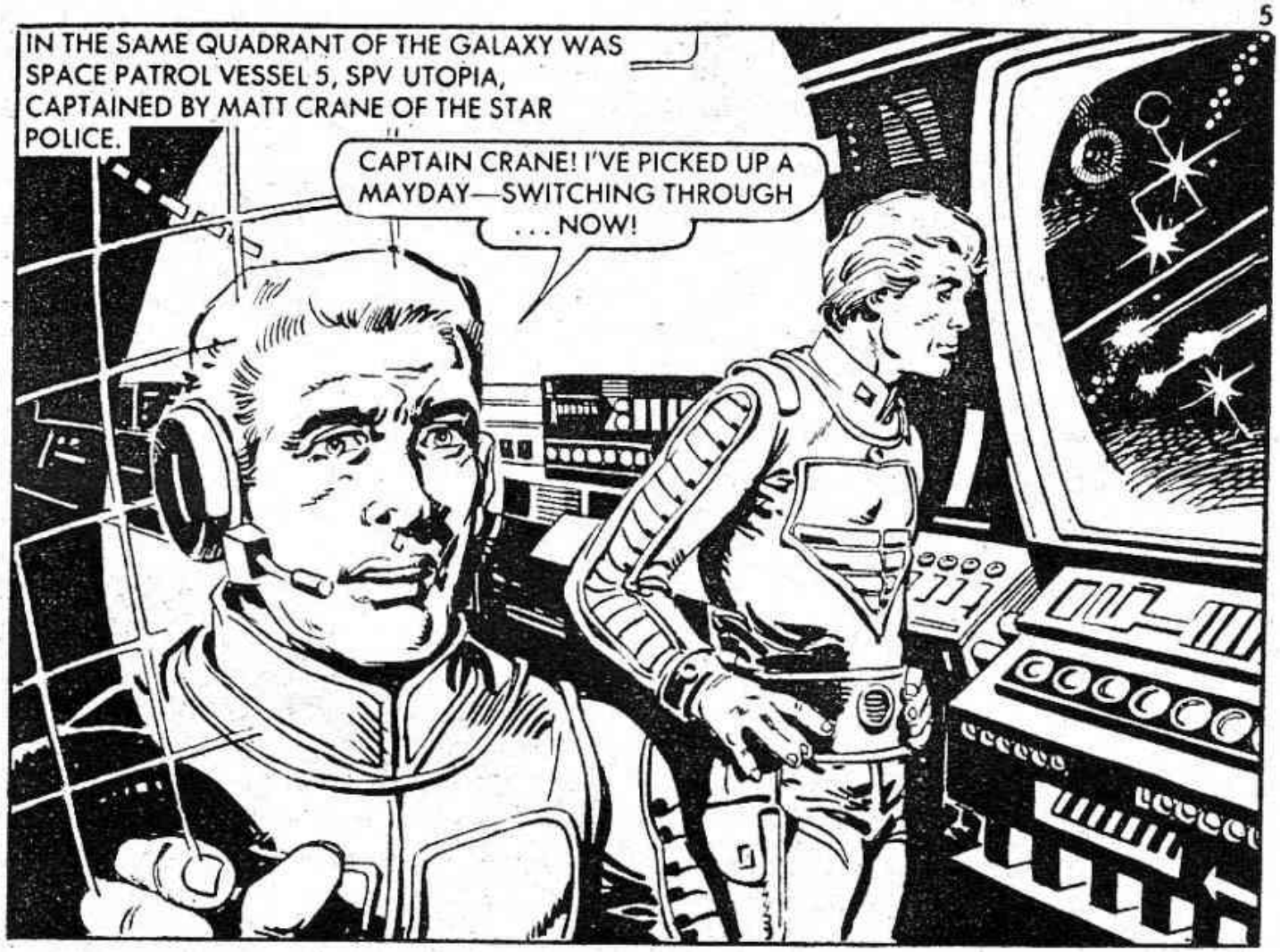


By the year 3000, vast areas of the galaxy had been opened up for trading. Mineral-rich planets attracted Starfreighters of all sizes. The Space Patrol scouted up and down the starlanes, constantly on the alert for trouble of any kind. And it was trouble of an unknown kind that struck Space Patrol Vessel Utopia.


THE SHIPEATER
A LARGE FREIGHTER DRIFTED SILENTLY IN THE VASTNESS OF SPACE,
DEBRIS TRAILING WEIGHTLESSLY BEHIND IT.

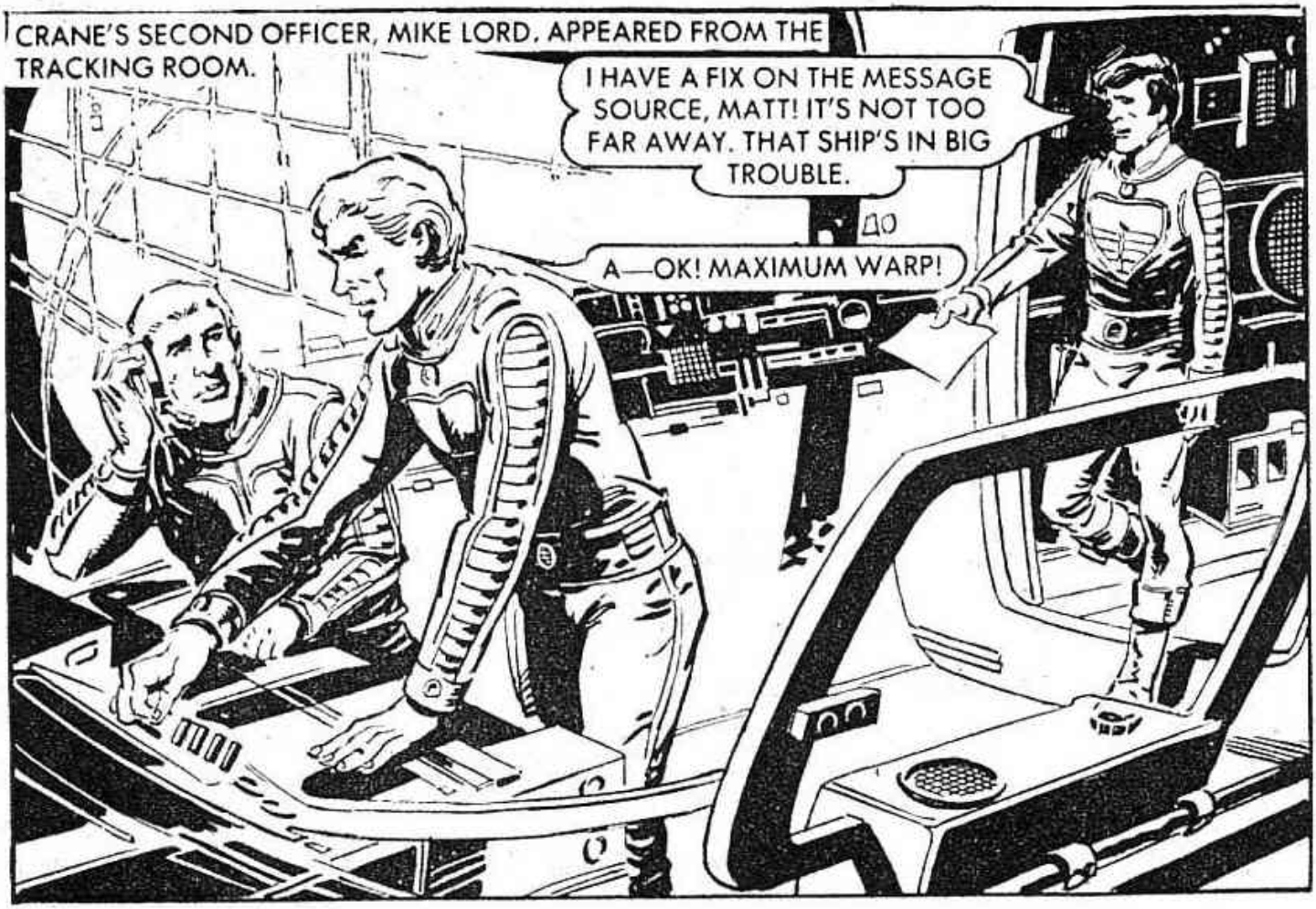
WITH HIS DYING BREATH, A CREWMAN DRAGGED HIMSELF TOWARDS THE COMPUTER.
GOT . . . TO . . REACH . . . MUST . . . WARN . . . OTHERS . . .

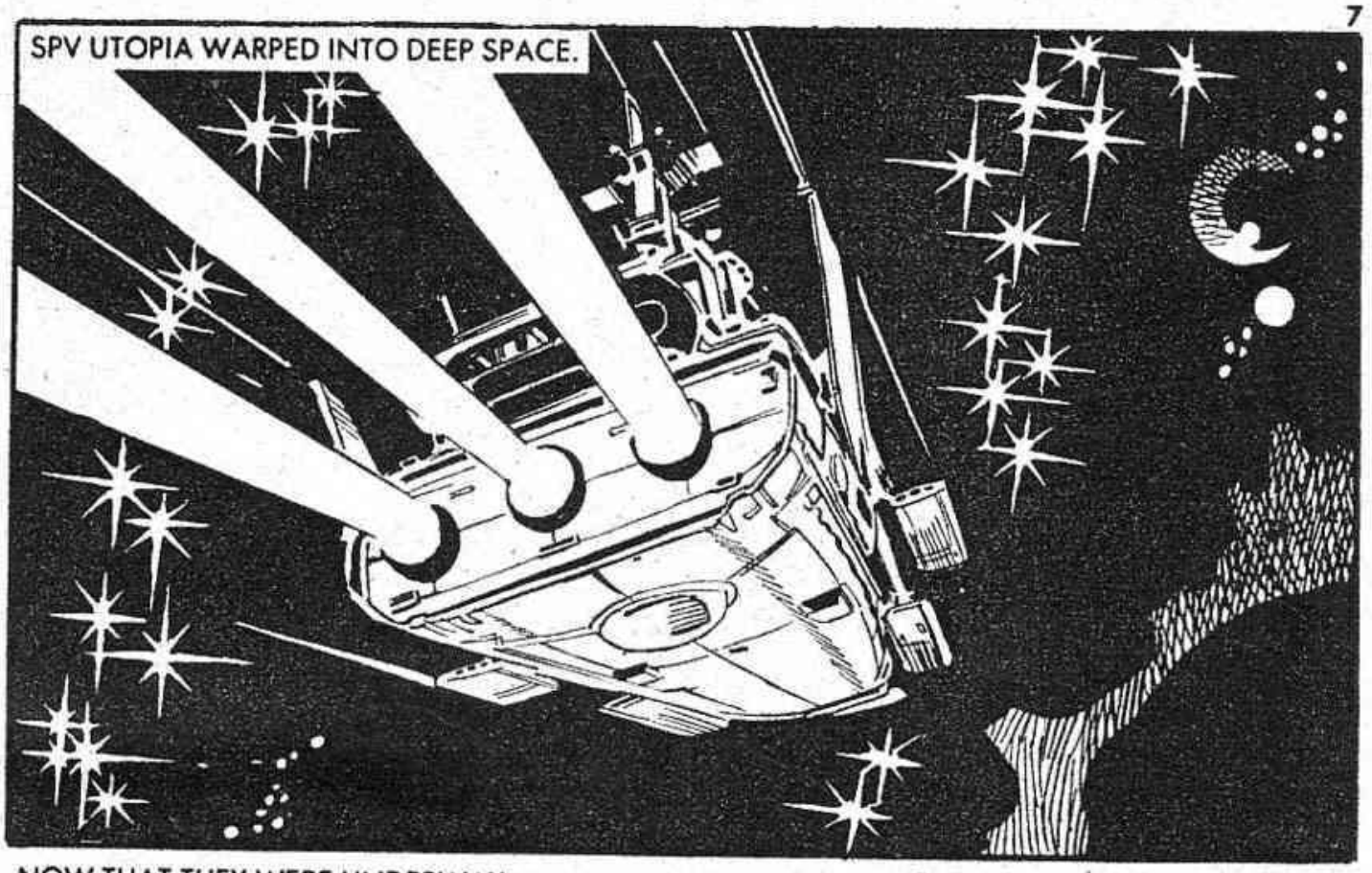
THIS IS . . . CARGOSHIP MERCURY . . . MAYDAY . . .
KLEP!


IN THE SAME QUADRANT OF THE GALAXY WAS SPACE PATROL VESSEL 5, SPV UTOPIA, CAPTAINED BY MATT CRANE OF THE STAR POLICE.
CAPTAIN CRANE! I'VE PICKED UP A MAYDAY—SWITCHING THROUGH . . . NOW!

COMTECH IAN CRAIG RELAYED THE DISTRESS CALL OVER THE SHIP'S SPEAKERS.
. . . CRIPPLED. CREW ALL DEAD. ATTACKED BY A . . . NO . . . NO . . . IT'S . . .

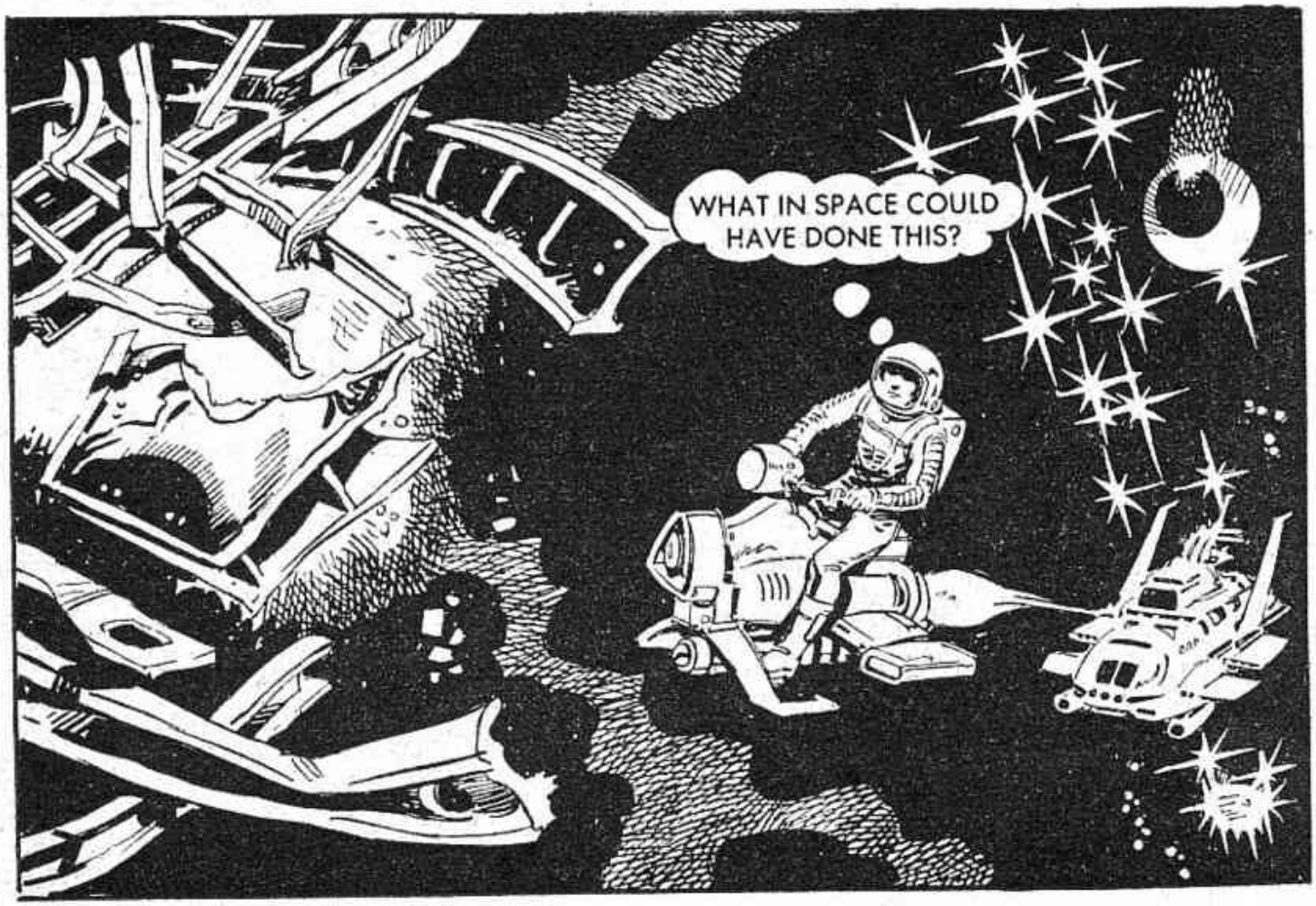
WHAT IN PLUTO'S NAME HAS HAPPENED, SPARKS? WHERE'S THE TRANSMISSION?
JUST ENDED SIR . . . THE POWER'S GONE!


CRANE'S SECOND OFFICER, MIKE LORD, APPEARED FROM THE TRACKING ROOM.
I HAVE A FIX ON THE MESSAGE SOURCE, MATT! IT'S NOT TOO FAR AWAY. THAT SHIP'S IN BIG TROUBLE.
A—OK! MAXIMUM WARP!



NOW THAT THEY WERE UNDERWAY, MATT HAD TIME TO CHECK THE CALL SOURCE ON THE COMPUTER.

MATT HAD SEEN THE WRECKED SHIP ON THE VIDEO, AND HE WAS A WORRIED MAN.
THE SENSORS SHOW NO SIGN OF LIFE, BUT SOMETHING MADE A MESS OF THAT. I'M GOING ACROSS TO HAVE A CLOSER LOOK.


WHAT IN SPACE COULD HAVE DONE THIS?

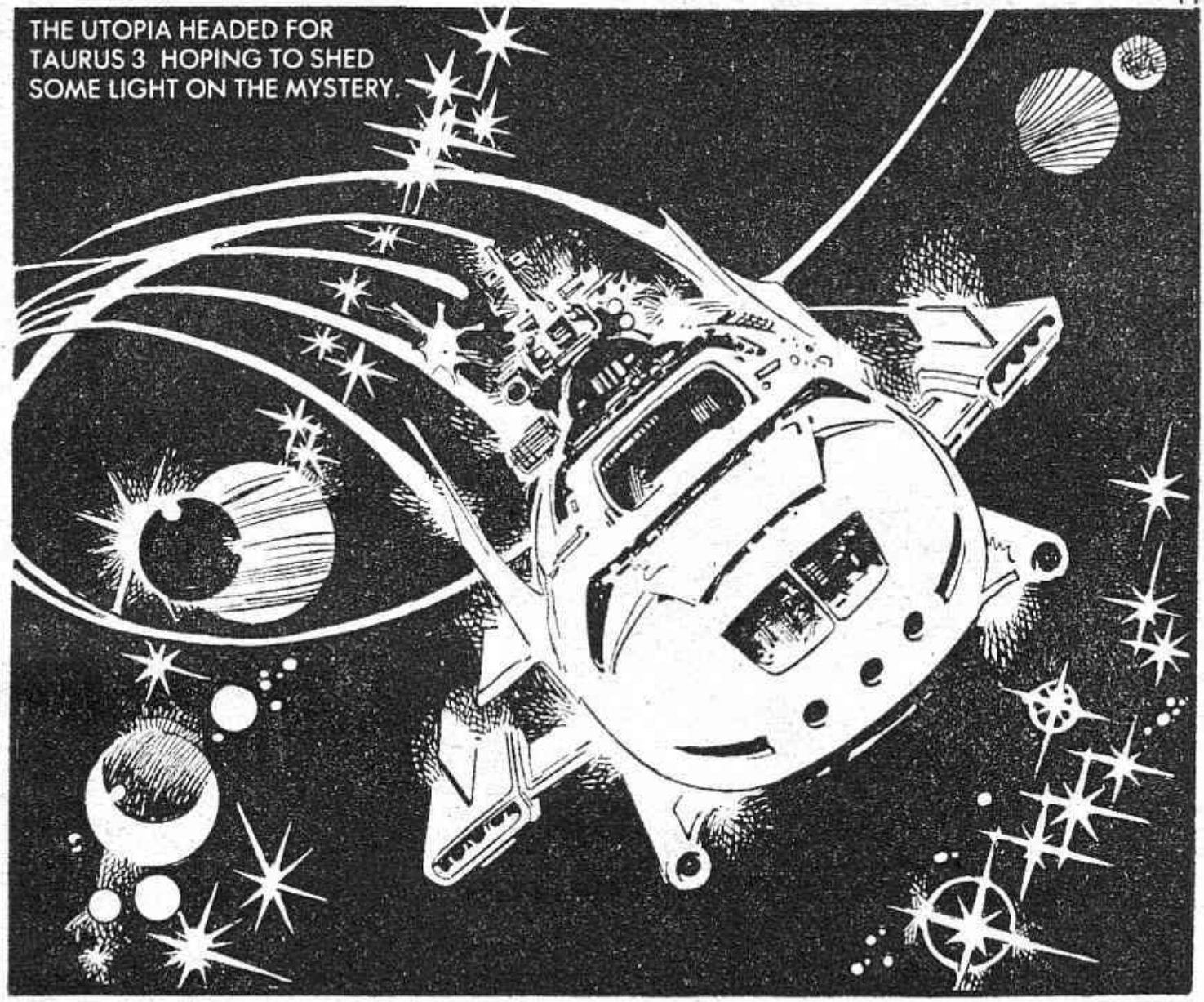
MATT CHECKED EVERY HOLD.
THE ENGINES HAVE GONE! IT MUST HAVE BEEN SOME SORT OF EXPLOSION.

IN THE CONTROL ROOM, MATT FOUND THE CREW . . .
ALL DEAD AND NO CLUES TO WHAT HAPPENED, UNLESS . . .

MATT FOUND THE SHIP'S DATA RECORDER.
THIS SHIP'S CARGO WAS RADIOACTIVE WASTE, AND NOW IT'S GONE— BUT WHERE? MAYBE THE LOG WILL TELL ME SOMETHING.

MATT RETURNED TO THE UTOPIA WITH THE DATA RECORDER.
WHATEVER HIT THAT SHIP TOOK ITS CARGO OF RADIOACTIVE WASTE.
THAT'S CRAZY! WHO'D WANT THAT STUFF? WHAT ARE WE GOING TO DO?

WE'LL VISIT TAURUS 3! IT'S THE NEAREST INHABITED PLANET. THEY MAY HAVE PICKED UP SOMETHING AS WELL.
THAT'S THE GOVERNMENT RESEARCH PLANET. TOP SECRET AND ALL THAT!


THE UTOPIA HEADED FOR TAURUS 3 HOPING TO SHED SOME LIGHT ON THE MYSTERY.

THE UTOPIA REACHED TAURUS 3 AND SETTLED INTO ORBIT.
GET IN TOUCH WITH CONTROLLER BOVIS AND TELL HIM I WANT TO SEE HIM URGENTLY, SPARKS.

MATT GOT HIS REPLY.
SIR! CONTROLLER BOVIS REFUSES PERMISSION TO LAND.
WHAT? LET ME TALK TO HIM.

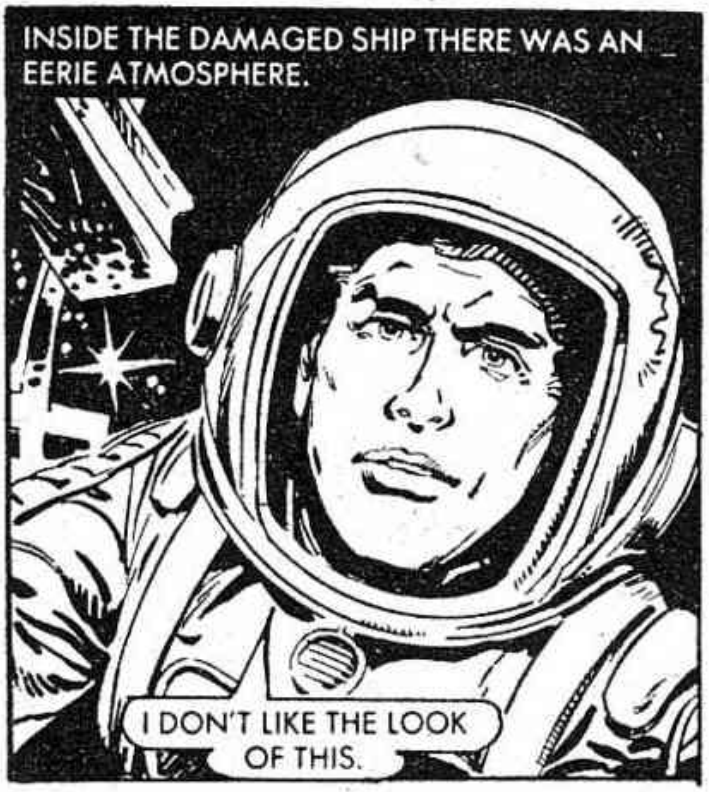
BUT JUST AS MATT REACHED FOR THE COMMUNICATION CHANNEL . . .
SIR, SIR! ANOTHER MAYDAY CALL.
THROUGH THE SPEAKERS, QUICK.

MAYDAY, MAYDAY, THIS IS THE REMUS . . . WE ARE BEING ATTACKED BY A LARGE CREATURE, IT'S HORRIBLE . . .
CUT OFF AGAIN!

ACTION STATIONS! FORGET TAURUS 3. GET THIS SHIP UNDERWAY. MAX WARP!!
CLIK!

THE UTOPIA ARRIVED AT THE SCENE TO DISCOVER A FAMILIAR SIGHT.

MATT DECIDED TO GO AND INVESTIGATE.
KEEP COMMUNICATIONS OPEN, MIKE. I'LL KEEP IN TOUCH.

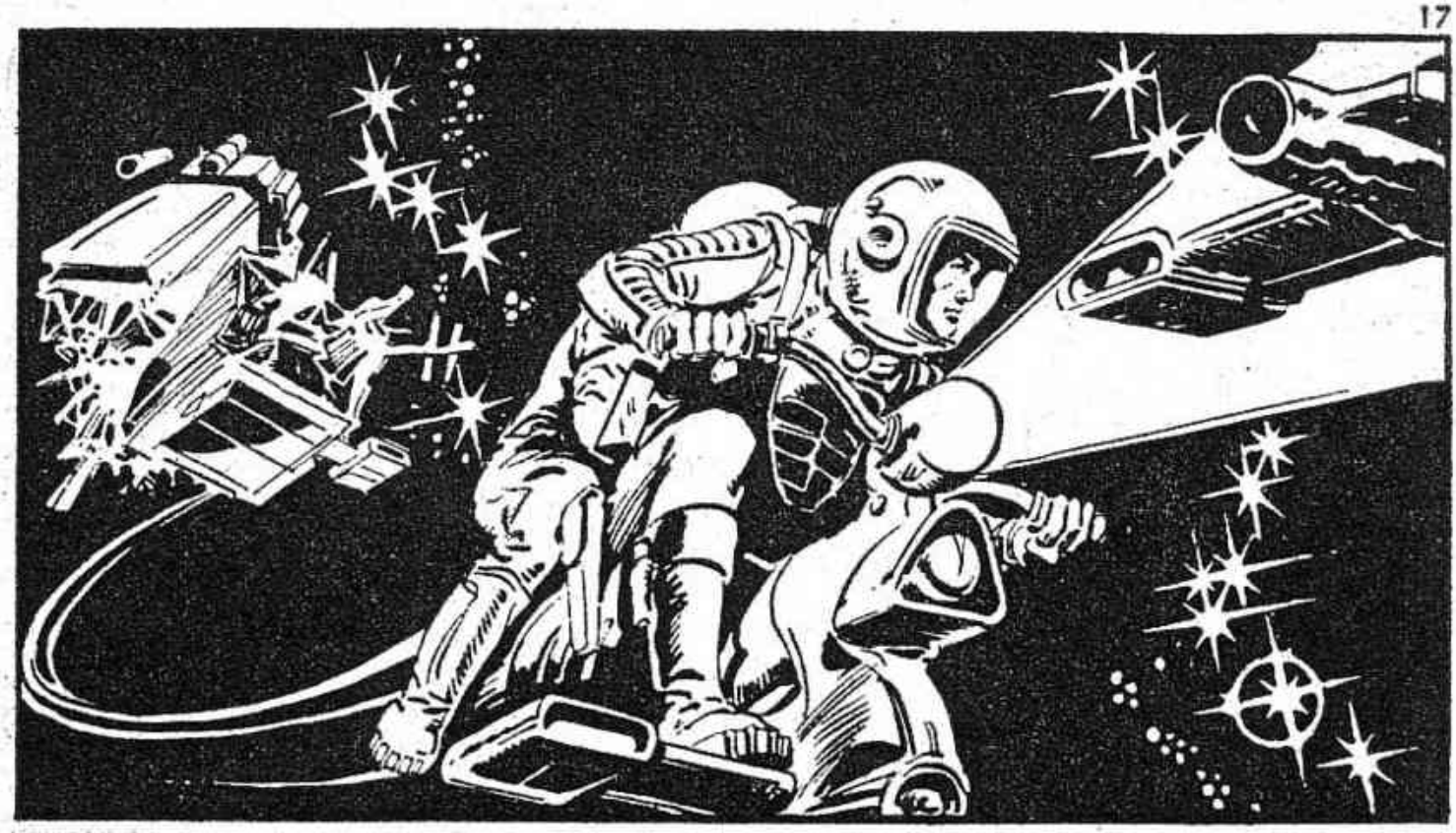

INSIDE THE DAMAGED SHIP THERE WAS AN EERIE ATMOSPHERE.
I DON'T LIKE THE LOOK OF THIS.

AAAAH!!

THE CRAZED MAN TRIED TO KILL MATT.
MATT KEPT A LASER KNIFE IN A LEG SHEATH. IT COULD CUT THROUGH ALMOST ANYTHING AND A PRICK FROM ITS POINT COULD STUN FOR HOURS.

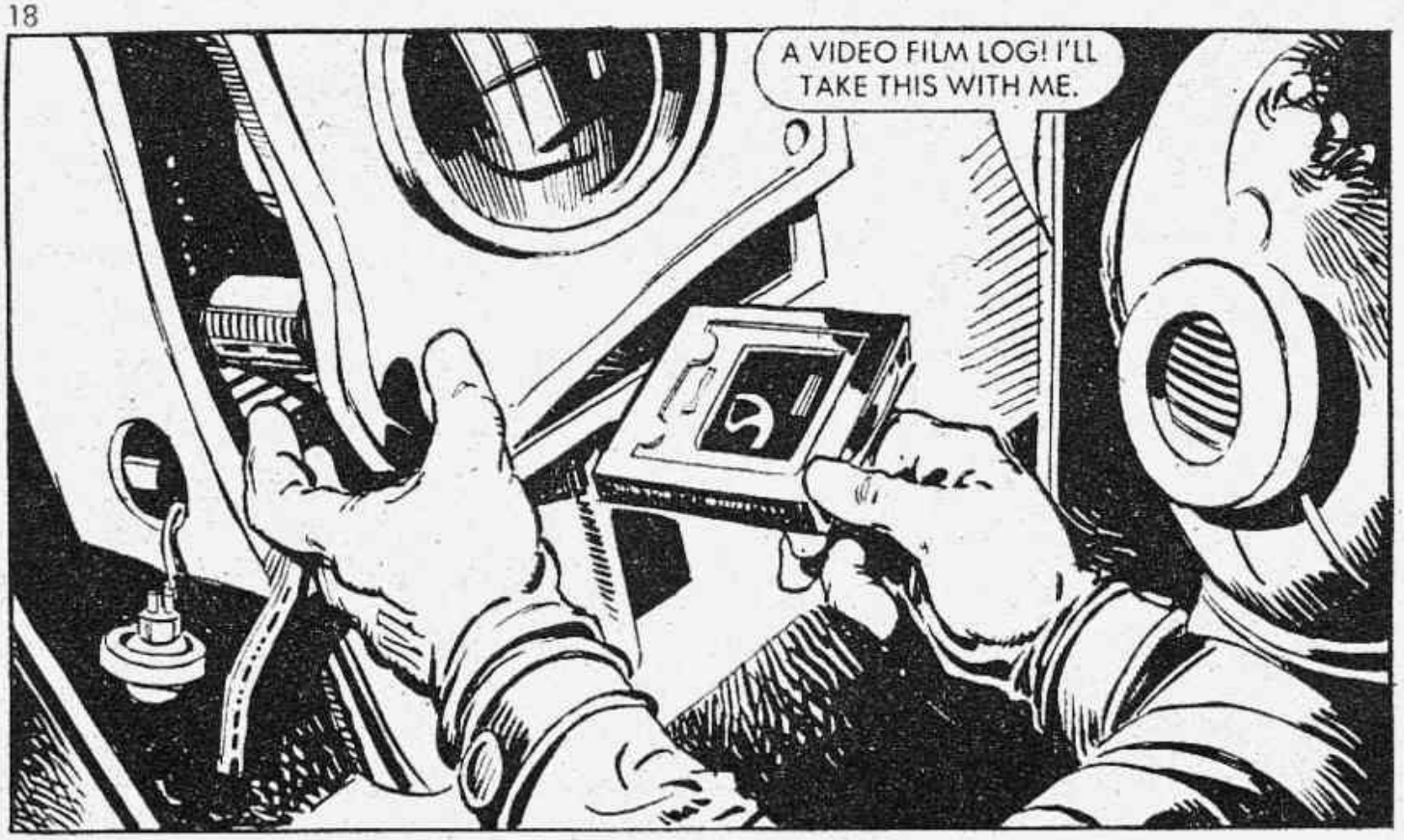
GOT HIM!

OUT COLD! I WONDER IF THERE ARE ANY MORE ABOUT?
BUT THERE WERE NO MORE.
MIKE! THERE'S ONE SURVIVOR! I'M BRINGING HIM BACK.



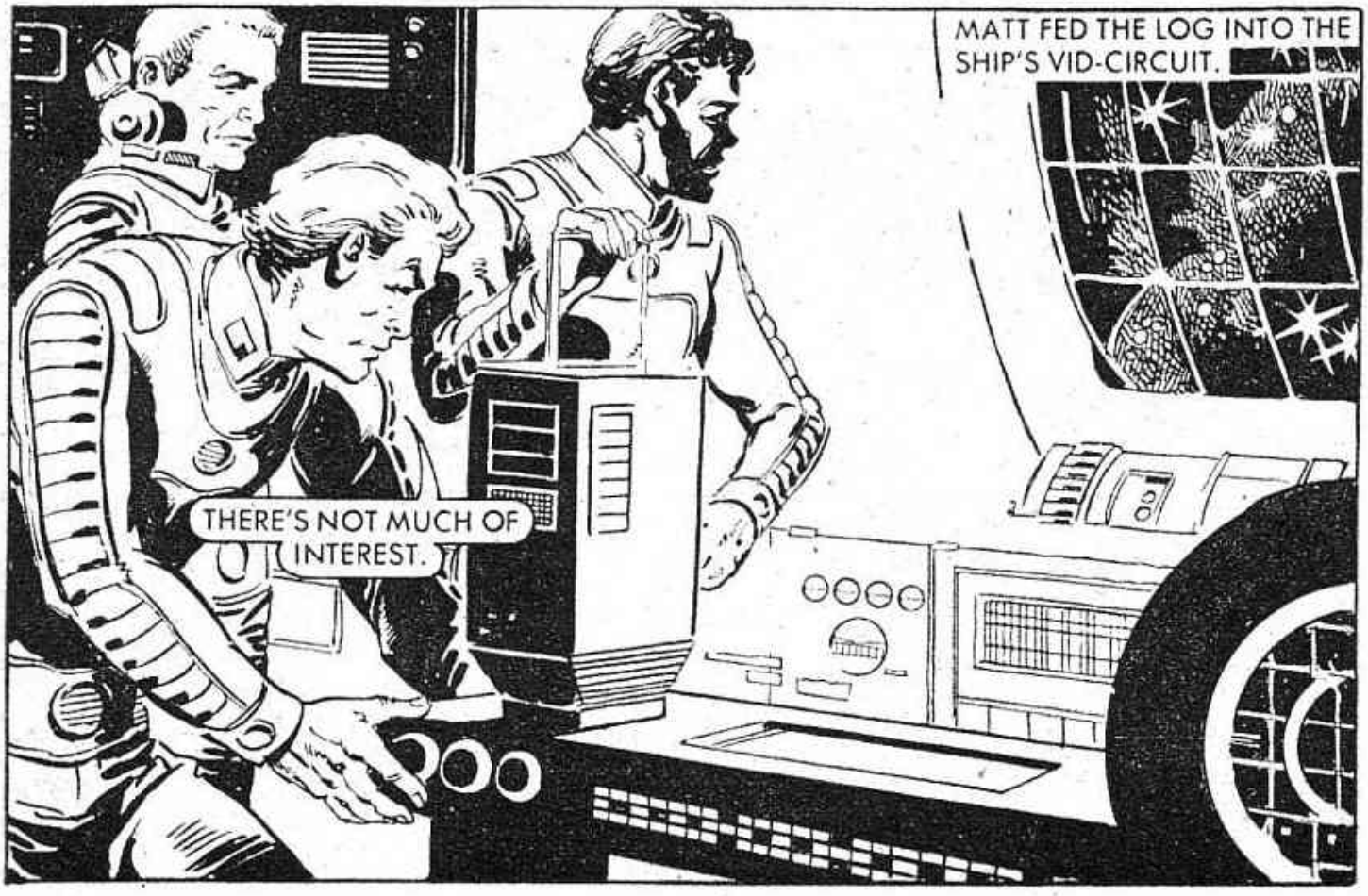
MATT HANDED THE SURVIVOR OVER TO MIKE.
GET HIM TO SICK BAY. I'M GOING TO GET THE SHIP'S LOG. THEN WE'LL GET OUT OF HERE.

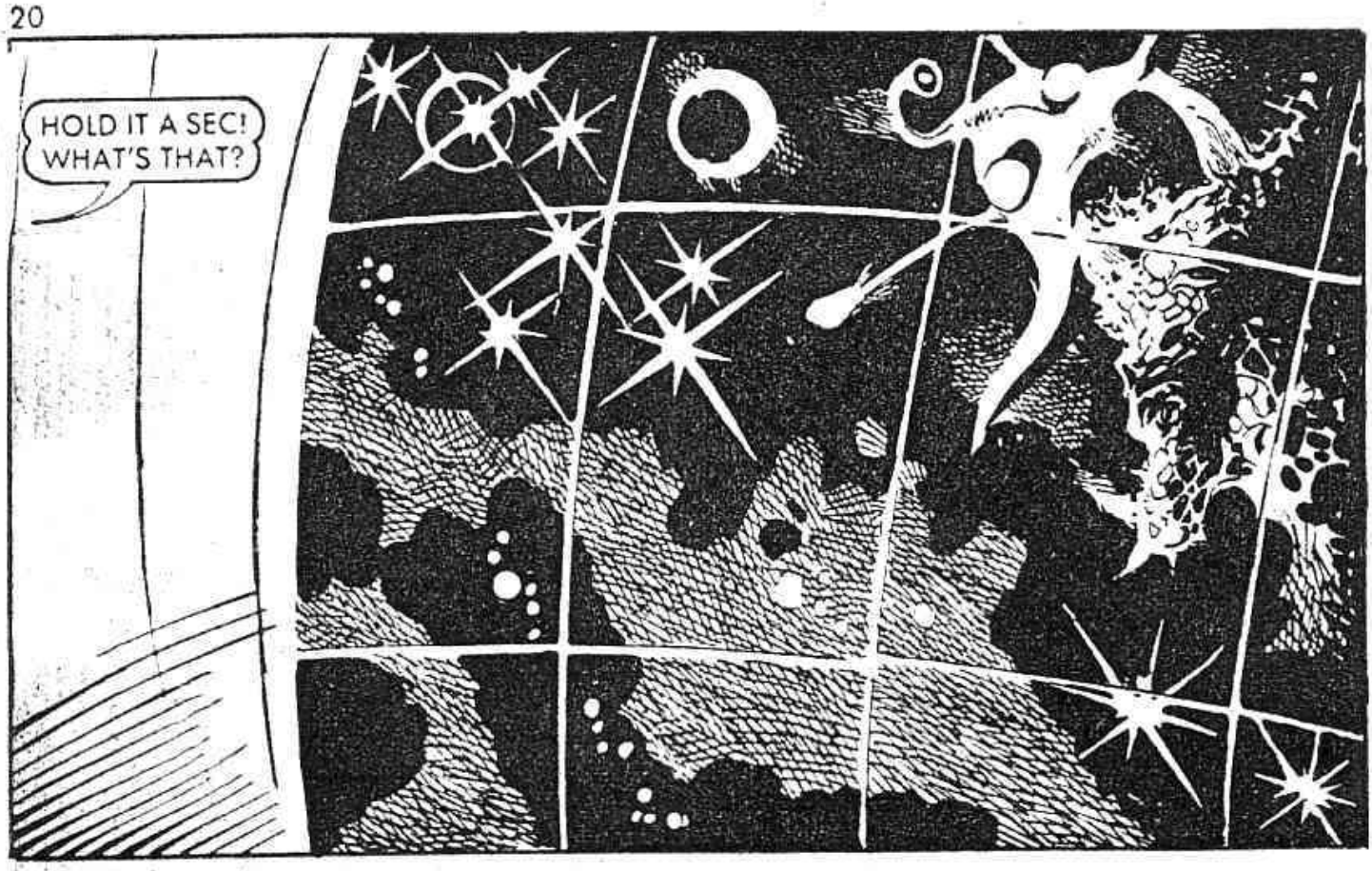
BACK IN THE CONTROL ROOM OF THE WRECK.
POOR DEVILS! THEY DIDN'T HAVE A CHANCE.


A VIDEO FILM LOG! I'LL TAKE THIS WITH ME.

ON THE UTOPIA.
ANY INFORMATION FROM THAT SURVIVOR?
WHATEVER HE SAW DROVE HIM MAD, MATT. HE'S JUST RAMBLING.

I FOUND THIS ON BOARD. PERHAPS IT WILL PROVIDE A FEW ANSWERS.


MATT FED THE LOG INTO THE SHIP'S VID-CIRCUIT.
THERE'S NOT MUCH OF INTEREST.


HOLD IT A SEC! WHAT'S THAT?

A CREATURE LOOMED LARGER AND LARGER ON THE SCREEN.
IT'S A MONSTER OF SOME SORT.
IT'S ATTACKING THAT SHIP.

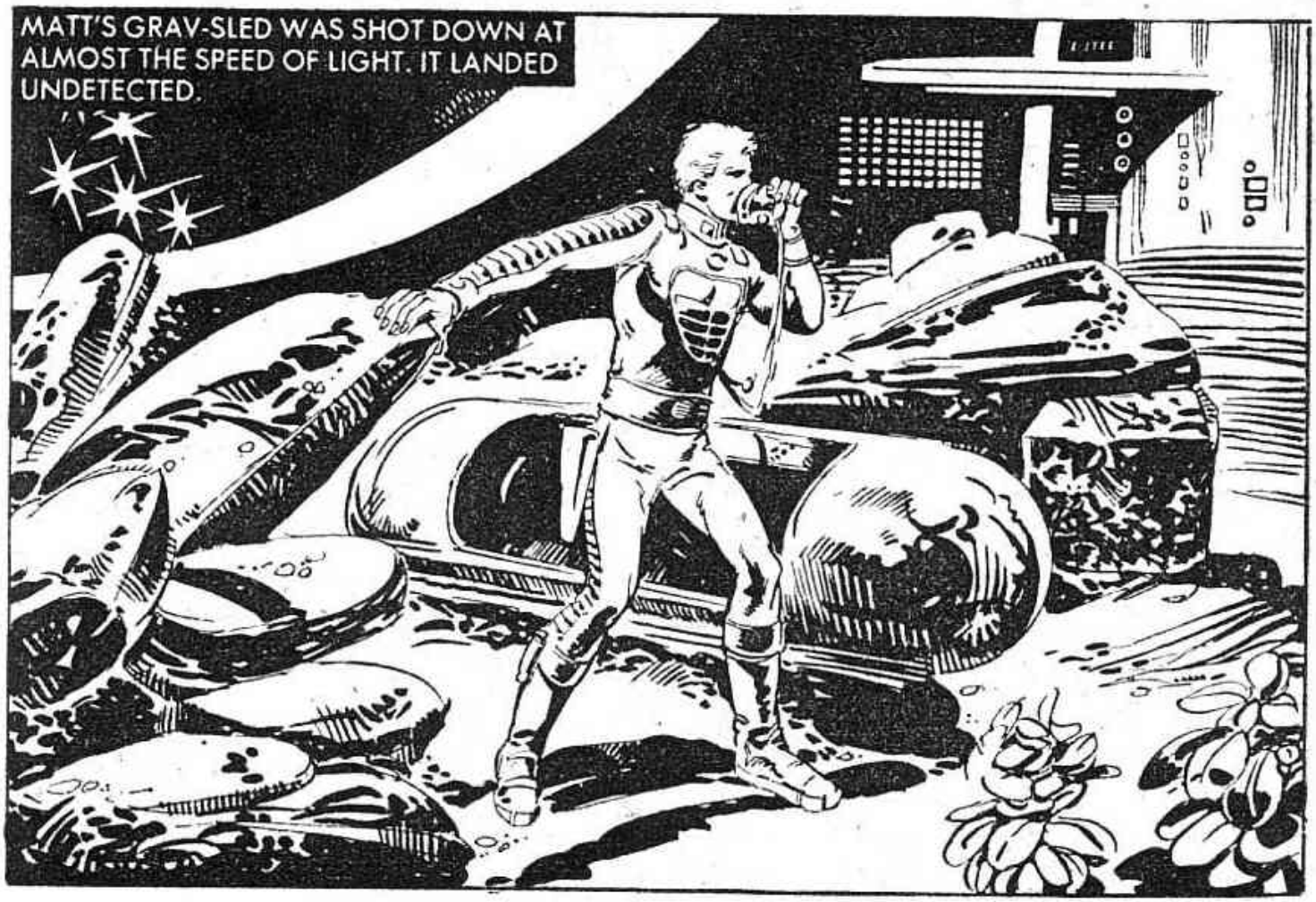
IT SEEMS TO BE FEEDING.
WHEN THEY SAID CREATURE THEY MEANT MONSTER! THAT THING IS HUGE!

IT'S GROWING.
IT'S FEEDING ON RADIOACTIVE WASTE?

I'VE HEARD OF SUCH A CREATURE, SIR.
WHAT? TELL ME ABOUT IT!

THE COMPUTER TECHNICIAN EXPLAINED—
MY BROTHER WORKS FOR UNIVERSAL WASTE DISPOSAL. HE SAYS THAT A CREATURE CALLED A DRAWN HAS BEEN DEVELOPED. IT EATS RADIOACTIVE WASTE.
HOW BIG? AND WHY HAVEN'T WE HEARD ABOUT IT?
PRETTY SMALL, AND IT'S TOP SECRET.
THIS CASE IS GETTING STRANGE. LET'S GET BACK TO TAURUS 3. PERHAPS THOSE SCIENTISTS CAN HELP US.

BACK AT TAURUS 3, CONTROLLER BOVIS AGAIN REFUSED TO SEE MATT.
IF BOVIS WON'T SE ME—THEN I WILL HAVE TO ARRANGE MY OWN VISIT.
I'LL FIRE YOU DOWN JUST OUTSIDE THE COMPLEX.


MATT'S GRAV-SLED WAS SHOT DOWN AT ALMOST THE SPEED OF LIGHT. IT LANDED UNDETECTED.

MATT CREPT INTO THE NEAREST BUILDING . . .

BUT THIS TIME HE WAS DETECTED.
AN INTRUDER.
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WHAT ARE YOU DOING?
SORRY, CHUM. NO TIME FOR ANSWERING QUESTIONS.

ENJOY YOUR SLEEP.
MATT FLICKED HIS ARM FORWARD, AND HIS LASER KNIFE SPED TO ITS TARGET.

MATT REMOVED THE GUARD'S PASS AND SLOTTED IT INTO THE WALL.

WHERE DOES THIS DOOR LEAD TO?

MATT FOUND HIMSELF IN THE SPACECRAFT HANGARS.
BY JUPITER! NO WONDER BOVIS DIDN'T WANT ME NOSING AROUND.

I WONDER WHAT CAUSED ALL THIS DAMAGE?

SUDDENLY . . .
DON'T TOUCH, CRANE. BOVIS WANTS TO SEE YOU.
GOOD, I WANT TO SEE HIM TOO.

MATT WAS TAKEN BEFORE AN ANGRY BOVIS.
WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE? WHY ARE YOU SO KEEN TO SEE THIS PLANET?
GET RID OF YOUR GOONS AND I'LL TELL YOU.

THE GUARDS WERE SENT AWAY.
JUST WHAT IS GOING ON HERE?
EXPERIMENTS—AND IT'S NONE OF YOUR BUSINESS.

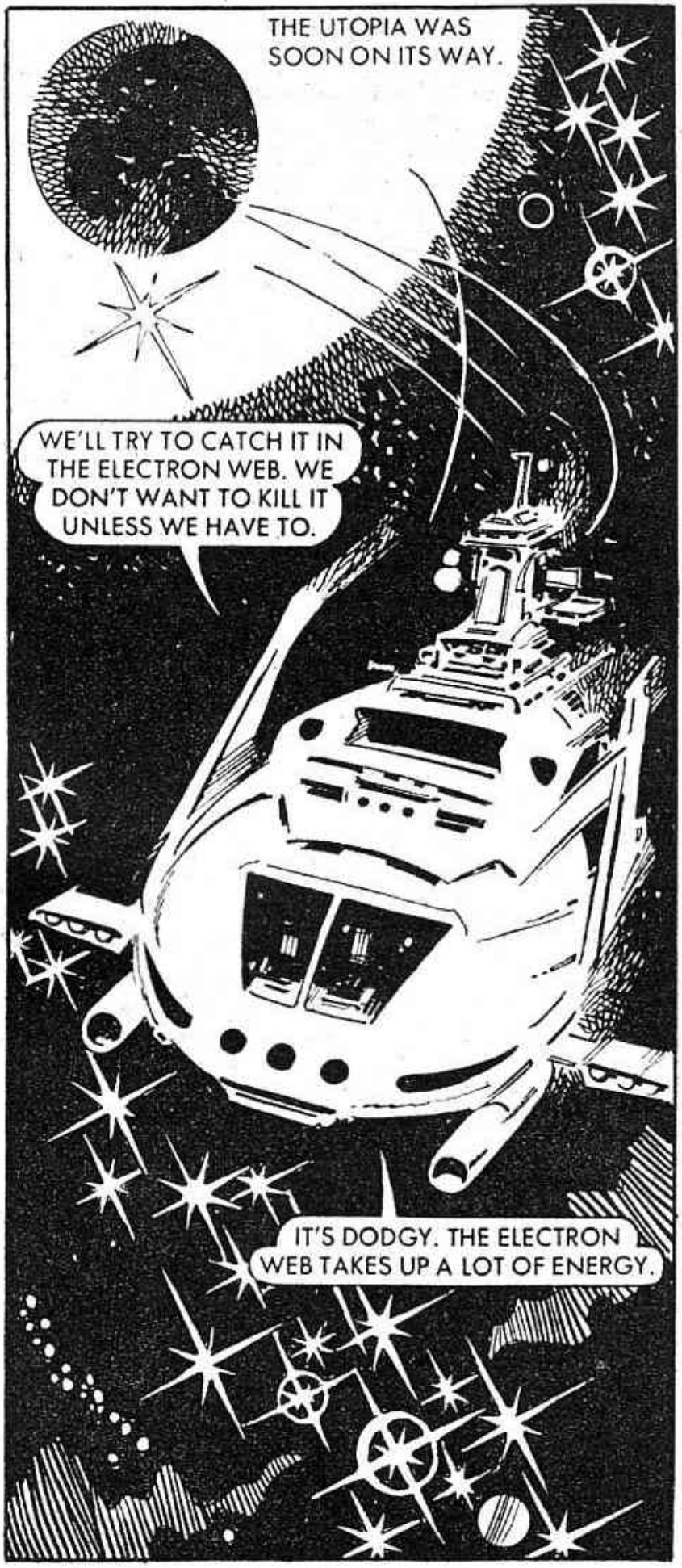
MATT LOST HIS TEMPER.
I'M LOOKING FOR ANSWERS. WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT THESE CREATURES CALLED DRAWNS—AND WHAT HAS HAPPENED TO YOUR SHIPS?
POW

I KNOW NOTHING ABOUT DRAWNS—IN THE HANGAR WE JUST HAD AN EXPERIMENT THAT GOT A LITTLE OUT OF HAND, THAT'S ALL.

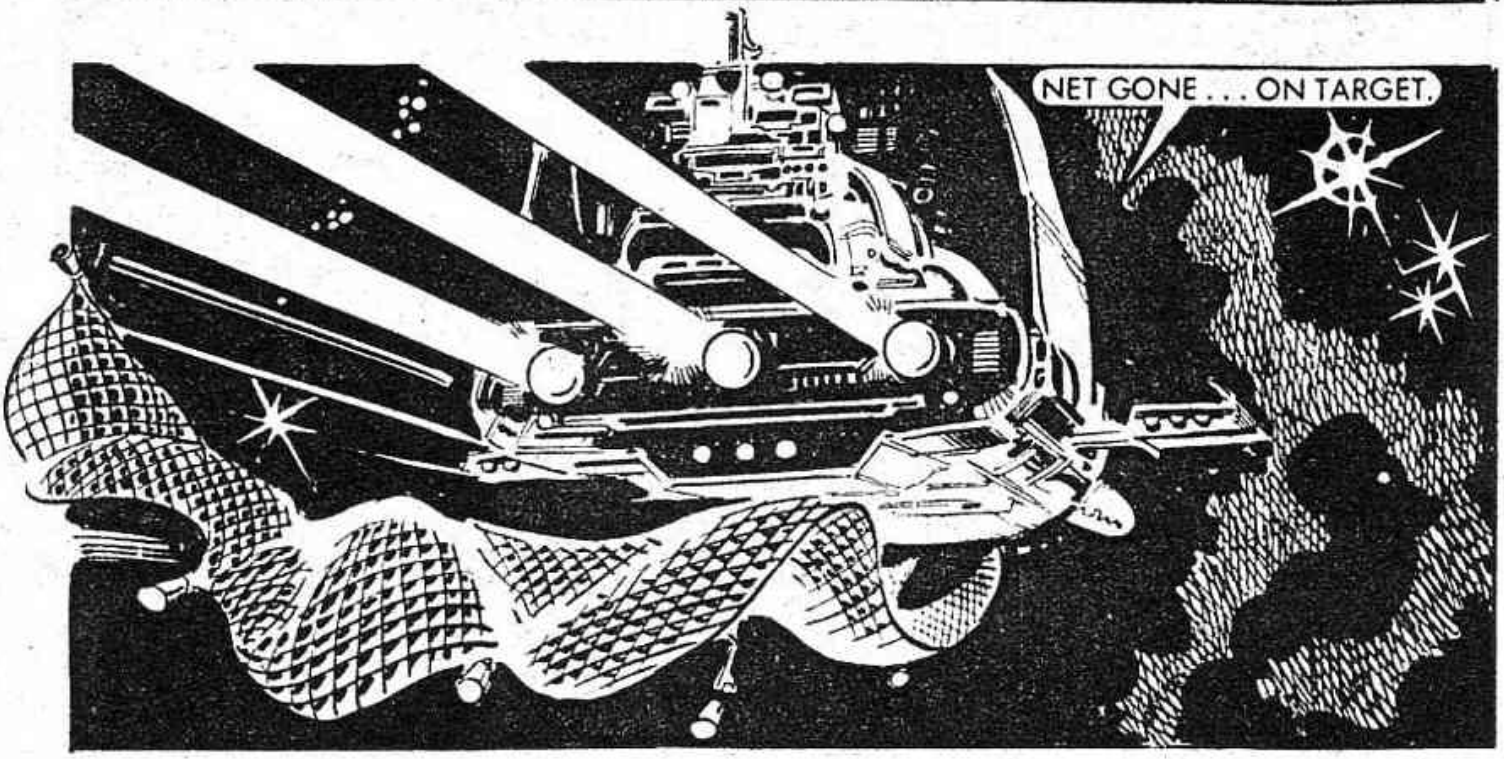
I DON'T TRUST YOU. I'M GOING TO GET TO THE BOTTOM OF THIS.

THEY WERE INTERRUPTED BY A BLEEP FROM A DESK COMMUNICATOR.
LORD HERE. THERE'S BEEN ANOTHER MAYDAY CALL, IT'S QUITE CLOSE.
I'LL BE RIGHT UP.

I'LL BE BACK, BOVIS. WE HAVEN'T FINISHED OUR LITTLE TALK YET.

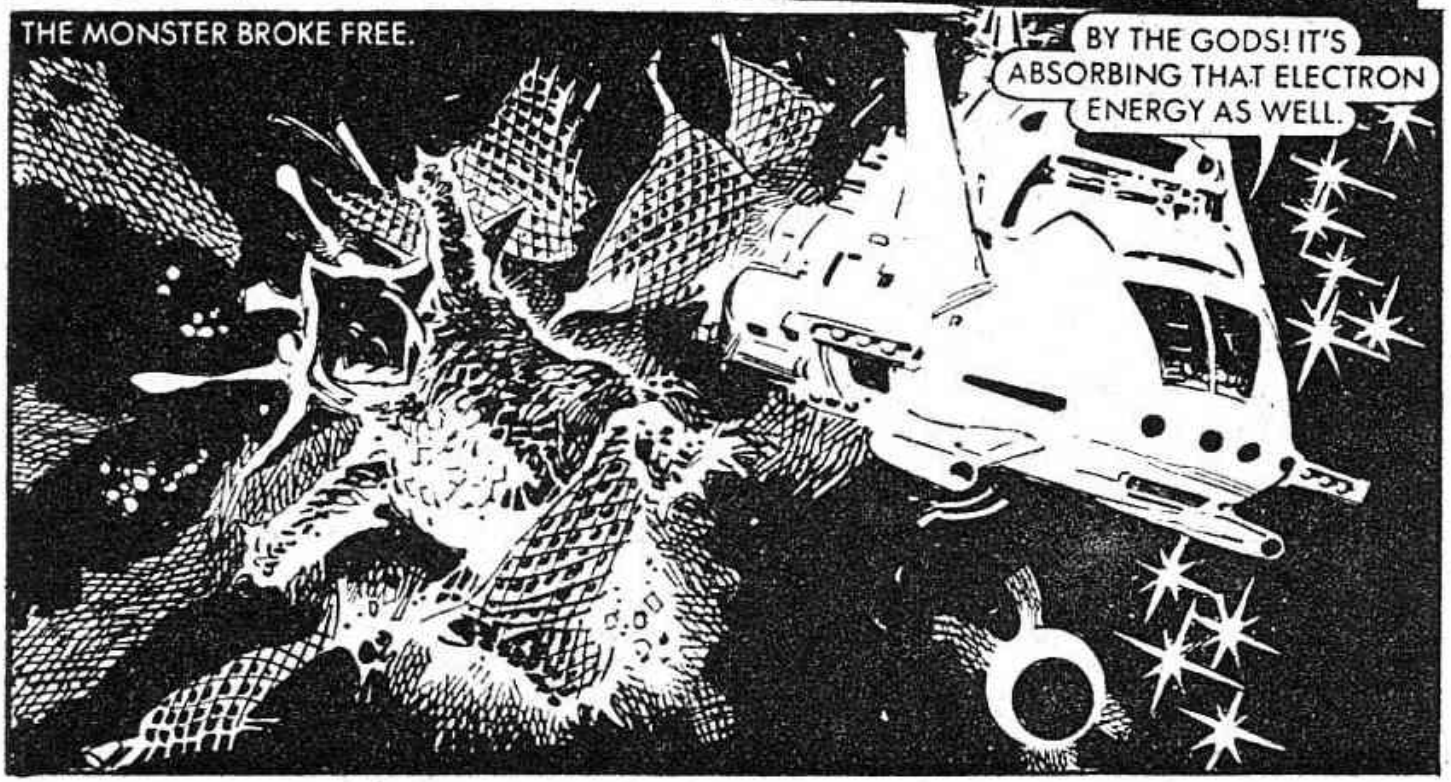

THE UTOPIA WAS SOON ON ITS WAY.
WE'LL TRY TO CATCH IT IN THE ELECTRON WEB. WE DON'T WANT TO KILL IT UNLESS WE HAVE TO.
IT'S DODGY. THE ELECTRON WEB TAKES UP A LOT OF ENERGY.

THEY PICKED UP THE MONSTER ON THE VID-SCREEN.
THERE IT IS. GET THE WEB OUT. WE'LL ONLY HAVE ONE CHANCE.


NET GONE . . . ON TARGET.

AS THE UTOPIA PASSED OVER THE CREATURE THE WEB SNARED IT.

BUT EVEN THE POWERFUL ELECTRON WEB FAILED TO HOLD THE CREATURE.

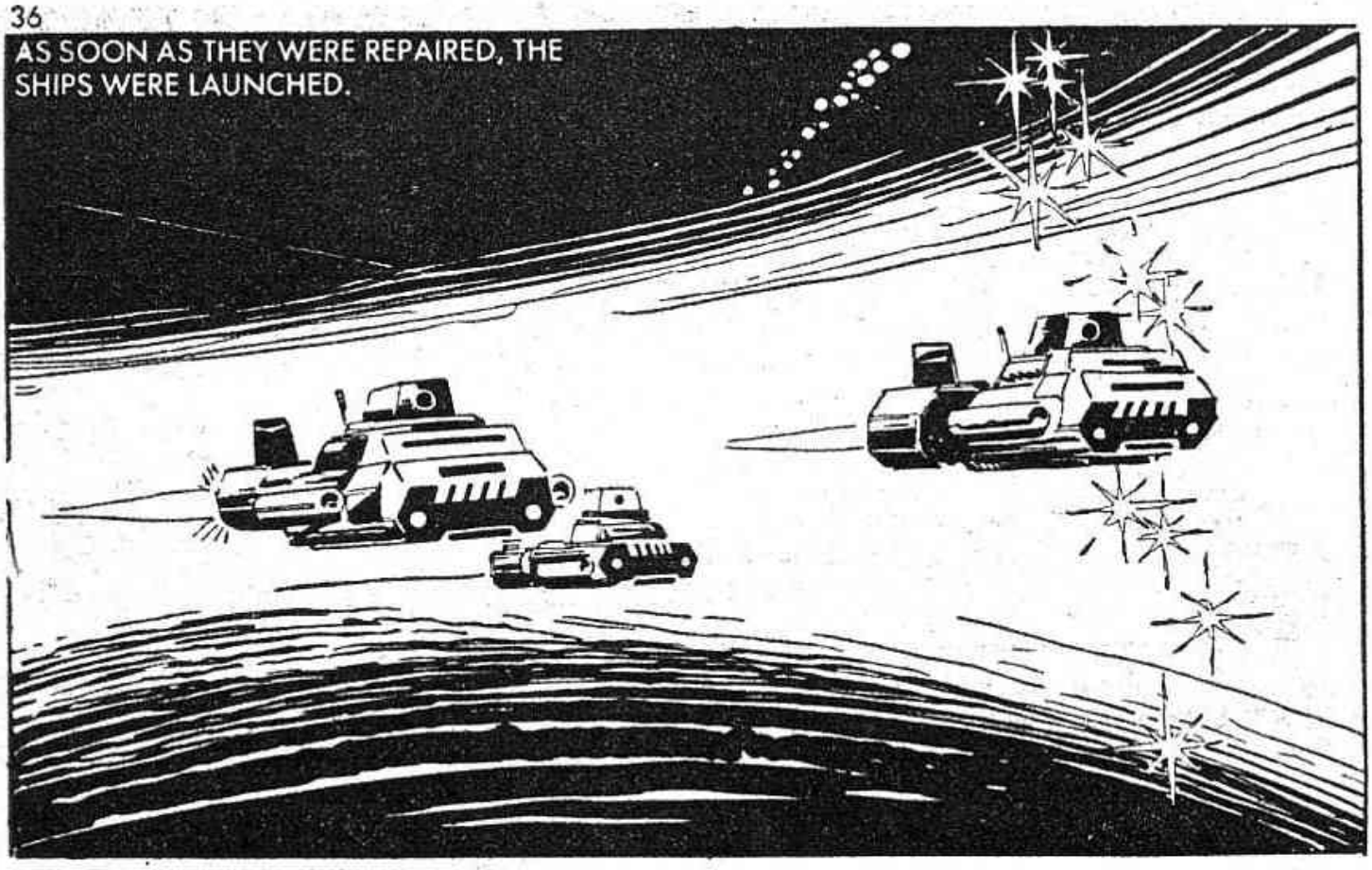

THE MONSTER BROKE FREE.
BY THE GODS! IT'S ABSORBING THAT ELECTRON ENERGY AS WELL.

INSIDE THE UTOPIA.
IT JUST DRAINED THE ENERGY FROM THE WEB, AND OUR POWER BANKS HAVEN'T ENOUGH TO FOLLOW IT.
CHECK THE DAMAGE AND GET US BACK TO TAURUS. WE'RE GOING TO HAVE TO THINK THIS THING THROUGH.
SURE THING, MATT.

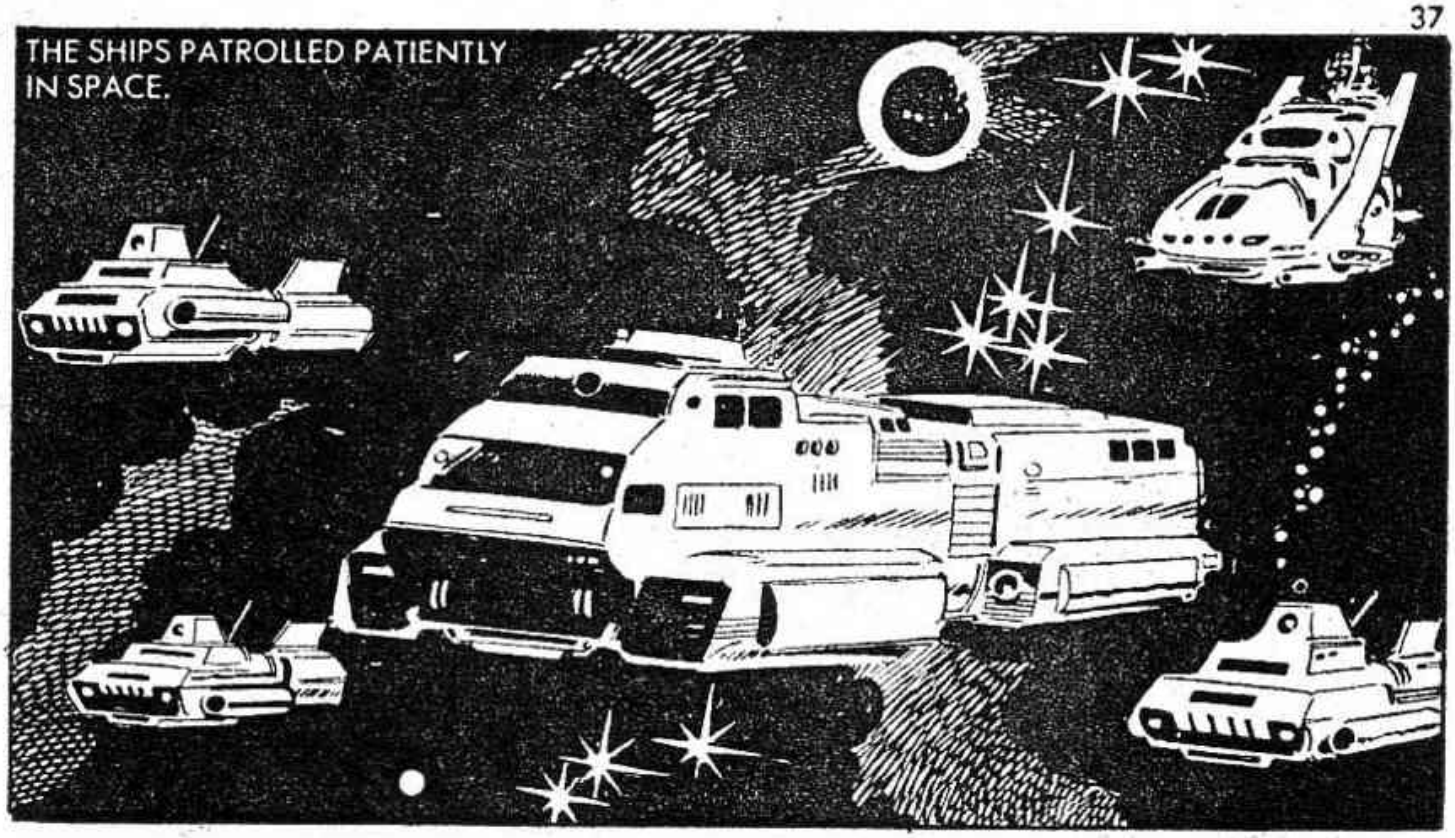
ON TAURUS MATT SAW BOVIS AGAIN.
THE ONLY WAY TO GET RID OF THAT CREATURE IS TO BLAST IT OUT OF SPACE.
WHAT AM I SUPPOSED TO DO?
BOVIS

I WANT THOSE SHIPS OF YOURS REPAIRED. THEN WE'LL GO AFTER THAT THING IN FORCE.
VERY WELL, CRANE. I'LL SEE THAT IT'S DONE.

I STILL DON'T TRUST BOVIS. I'LL CONTACT EARTH AND FIND OUT JUST WHAT DOES GO ON HERE.


AS SOON AS THEY WERE REPAIRED, THE SHIPS WERE LAUNCHED.

MATT MET THE OTHER CAPTAINS FOR A BRIEFING.
THERE'S ANOTHER TRANSPORTER DUE IN THIS AREA. WE'LL ESCORT HER AND WHEN THE DRAWN TURNS UP, WE'LL BLAST IT.


THE SHIPS PATROLLED PATIENTLY IN SPACE.

THERE IT IS!

THE DRAWN HEADED STRAIGHT FOR THE TRANSPORTER.
IT'S NOT BOTHERING WITH US! IT'S GOING STRAIGHT FOR A MEAL.
WE'LL HAVE TO OPEN FIRE! THERE'S NOT MUCH WE CAN DO FOR THE TRANSPORTER.

MATT GAVE THE ORDER TO OPEN FIRE.

THE BLASTING IS HAVING NO EFFECT. THAT THING JUST ABSORBS ALL THE SHOTS.

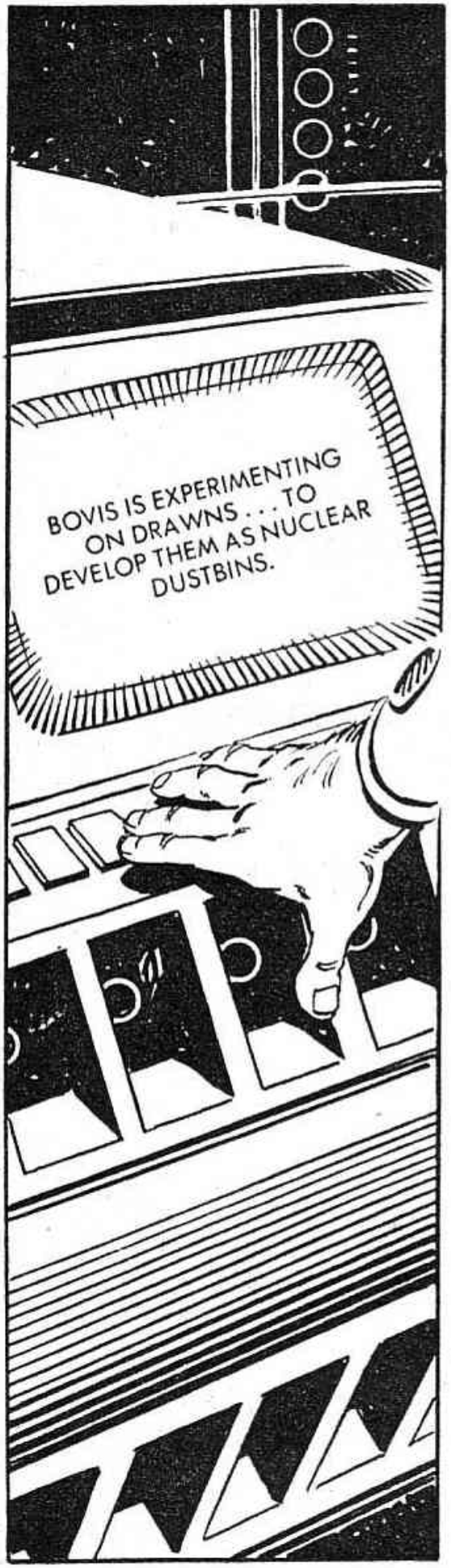
ONE OF THE SHIPS GOT TOO CLOSE.

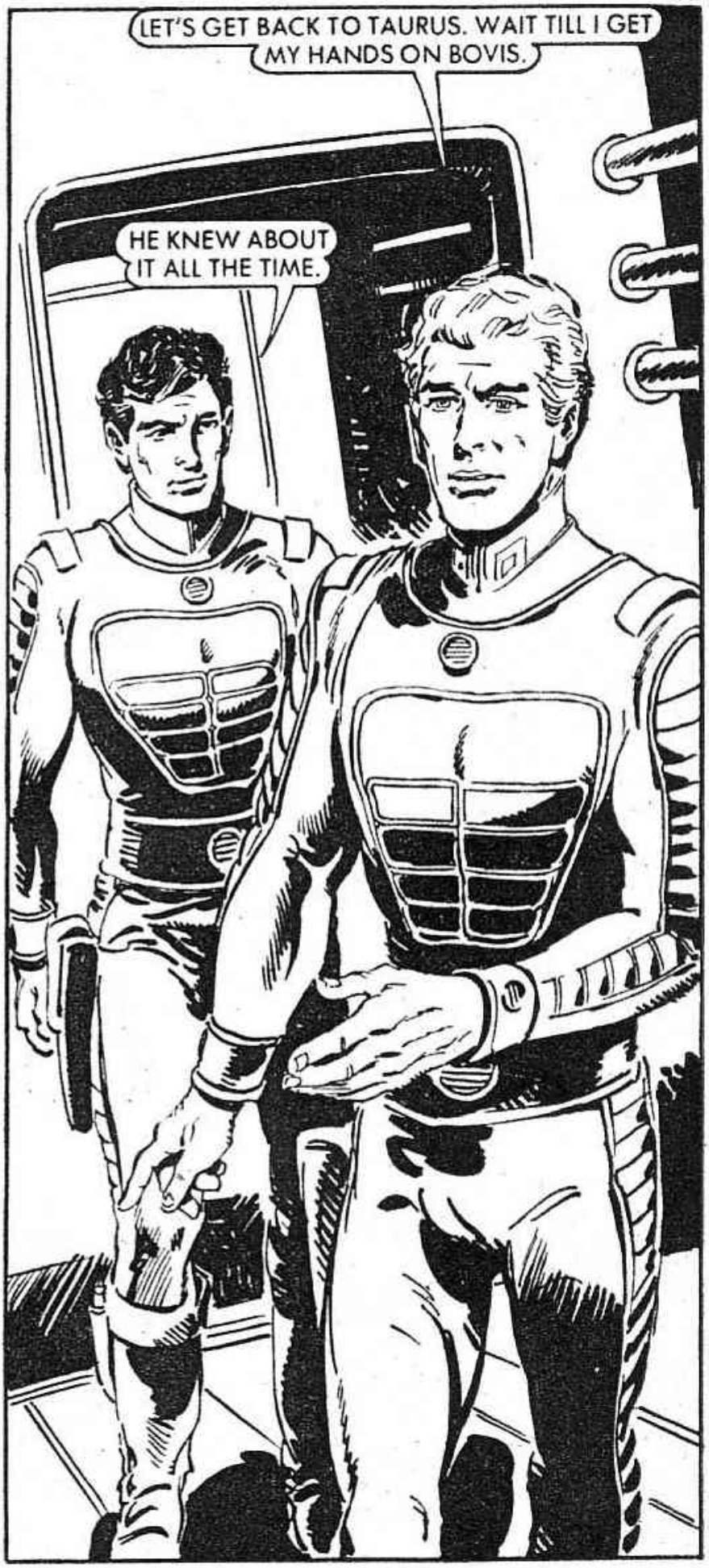
ANOTHER SHIP MOVED IN TO HELP, BUT . . .

THIS IS HOPELESS, THERE'S NOTHING WE CAN DO. TELL THE OTHER SHIP TO PULL BACK.

IT'S GROWING AGAIN. IS THERE NO WAY WE CAN STOP IT?
THERE MUST BE AN ANSWER.

SIR! A MESSAGE FROM EARTH!


BOVIS IS EXPERIMENTING ON DRAWNS . . . TO DEVELOP THEM AS NUCLEAR DUSTBINS.


LET'S GET BACK TO TAURUS. WAIT TILL I GET MY HANDS ON BOVIS.
HE KNEW ABOUT IT ALL THE TIME.

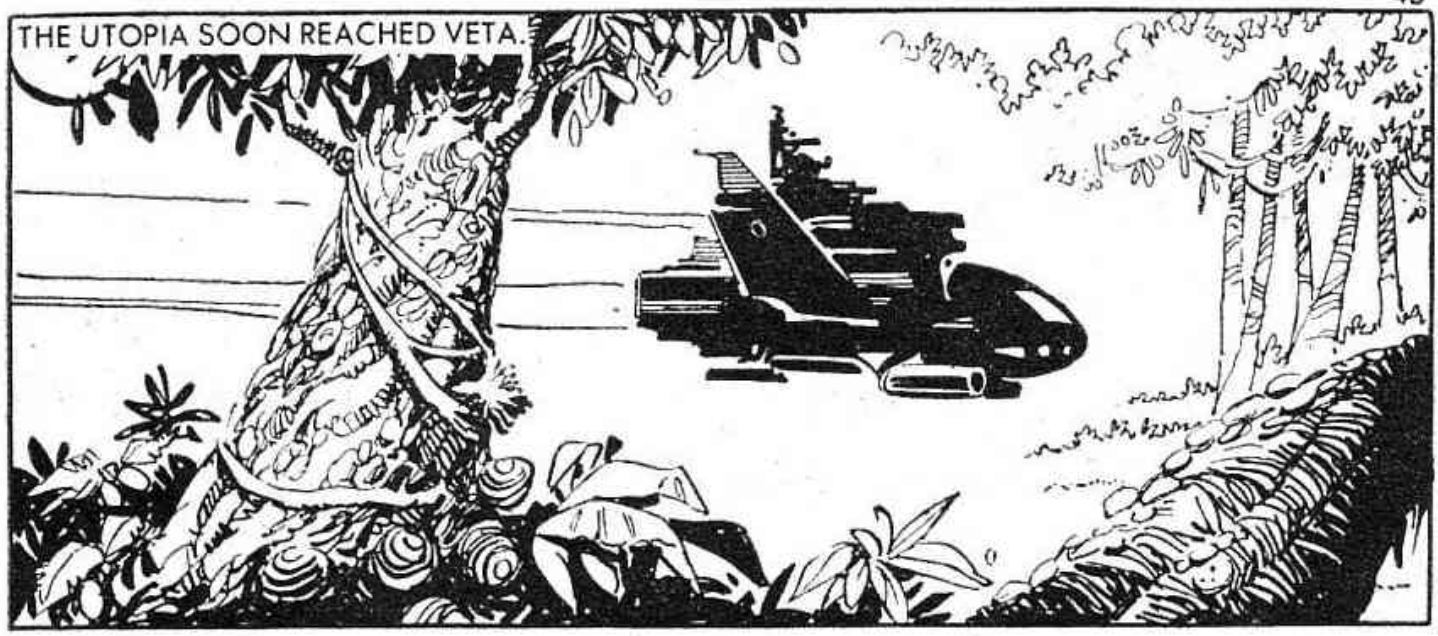
BACK ON TAURUS 3, MATT BURST INTO BOVIS'S OFFICE.
WHERE IS BOVIS?
HE'S GONE. HE LEFT ME IN CHARGE.

WHAT DO YOU MEAN GONE? GONE WHERE?
I DON'T KNOW. HE JUST TOOK A SOLO SHIP AND BLASTED OFF.

RUN AWAY, HAS HE? WELL, HE WON'T GET FAR.

BACK ON THE UTOPIA, MATT PLANNED TO FIND BOVIS.
BOVIS HAS RUN OFF IN A SOLO SHIP. WE'VE GOT TO CATCH HIM.
SOLO SHIPS CAN'T GET FAR. I'LL GET A LIST OF POSSIBLE DESTINATIONS.

VETA IS THE ONLY PLANET WITH AN OXYGEN ATMOSPHERE THAT HE CAN REACH.
I'LL BET HE'LL TRY FOR THAT. SET A COURSE FOR IT.


THE UTOPIA SOON REACHED VETA.

WE'VE LOCATED A CRASHED SHIP IN THAT DIRECTION.
LET'S GO AND SEE WHAT'S LEFT OF IT.

THERE IT IS. LET'S HAVE A CLOSER LOOK.

BOVIS ISN'T HERE. THE NATIVES ON THIS PLANET ARE VERY PRIMITIVE. THEY MAY HAVE CAPTURED HIM.

THERE ARE SIGNS OF A STRUGGLE HERE.

KEEP A WATCH FOR THE NATIVES.
LET'S HOPE WE FIND BOVIS IN ONE PIECE.

SOUNDS UP AHEAD. MOVE FORWARD QUIETLY SO THAT WE CAN TAKE A LOOK.

THERE'S BOVIS. WE'LL HAVE TO HELP HIM SOMEHOW.

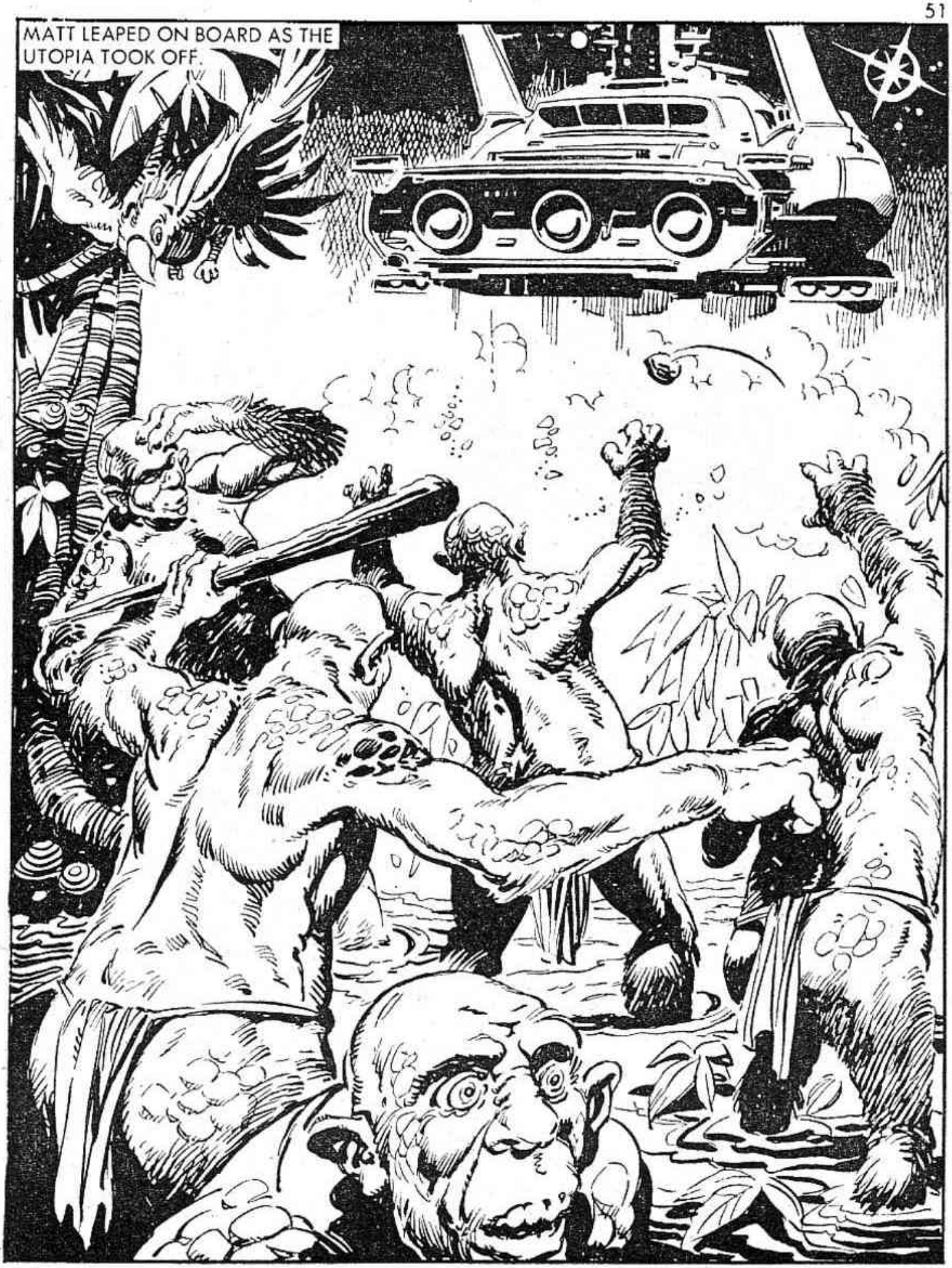
MIKE CAME UP WITH THE ANSWER.
I BROUGHT THESE FLARES ALONG. WE CAN MAKE A DIVERSION.
GREAT! IN THE CONFUSION WE CAN GRAB BOVIS.
THAT'S SURPRISED THEM! COME ON! GET YOUR STUN GUNS READY.
MIKE! FREE BOVIS WHILE WE KEEP YOU COVERED.

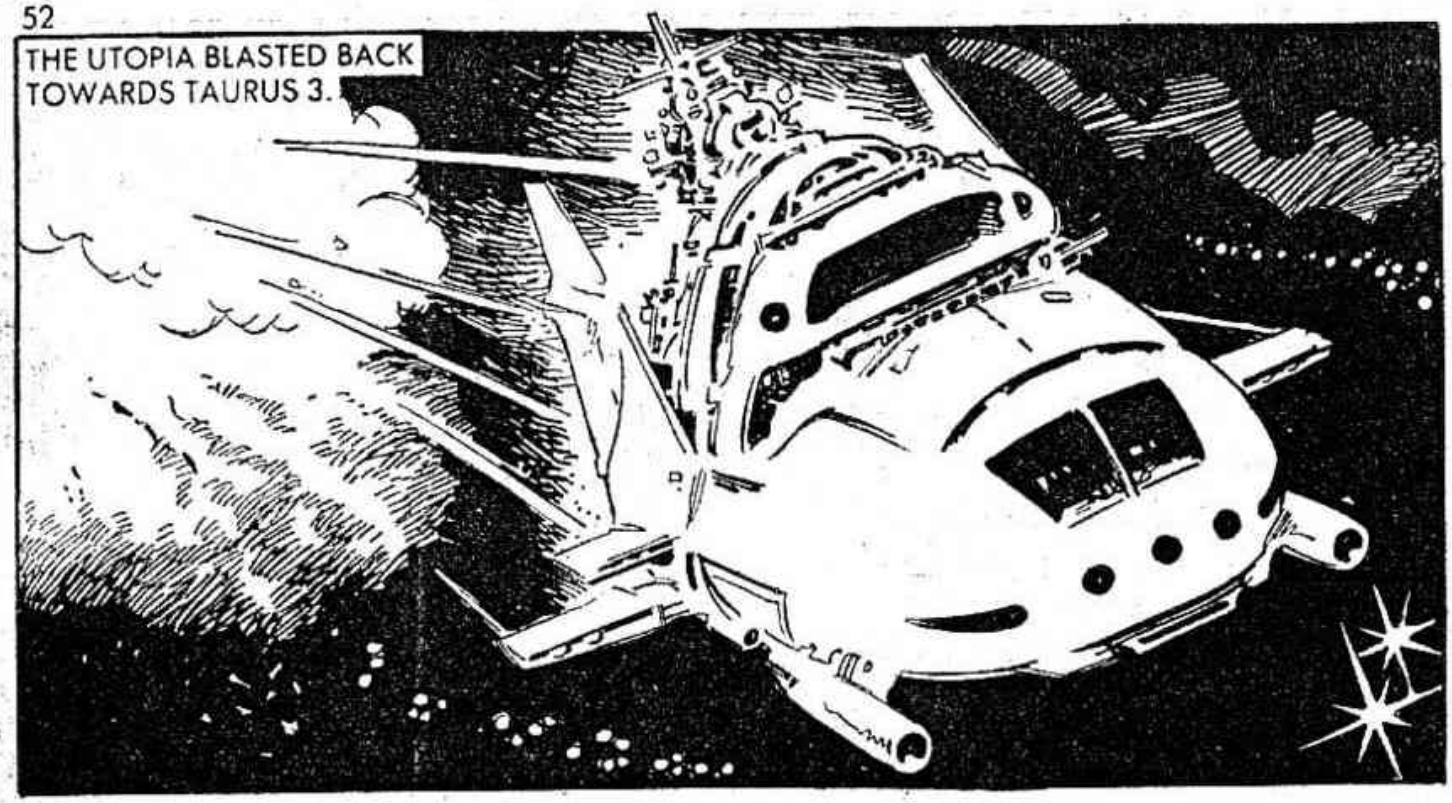
I'VE GOT HIM MATT.
BACK TO THE SHIP.

COME ON! YOU'VE CAUSED ENOUGH TROUBLE ALREADY.

THEY'RE STILL AFTER US. WE'VE GOT TO KEEP GOING.
WE'RE LUCKY THEY'VE ONLY GOT STONES.

GET BOVIS ON BOARD. I'LL KEEP THEM AT A DISTANCE.

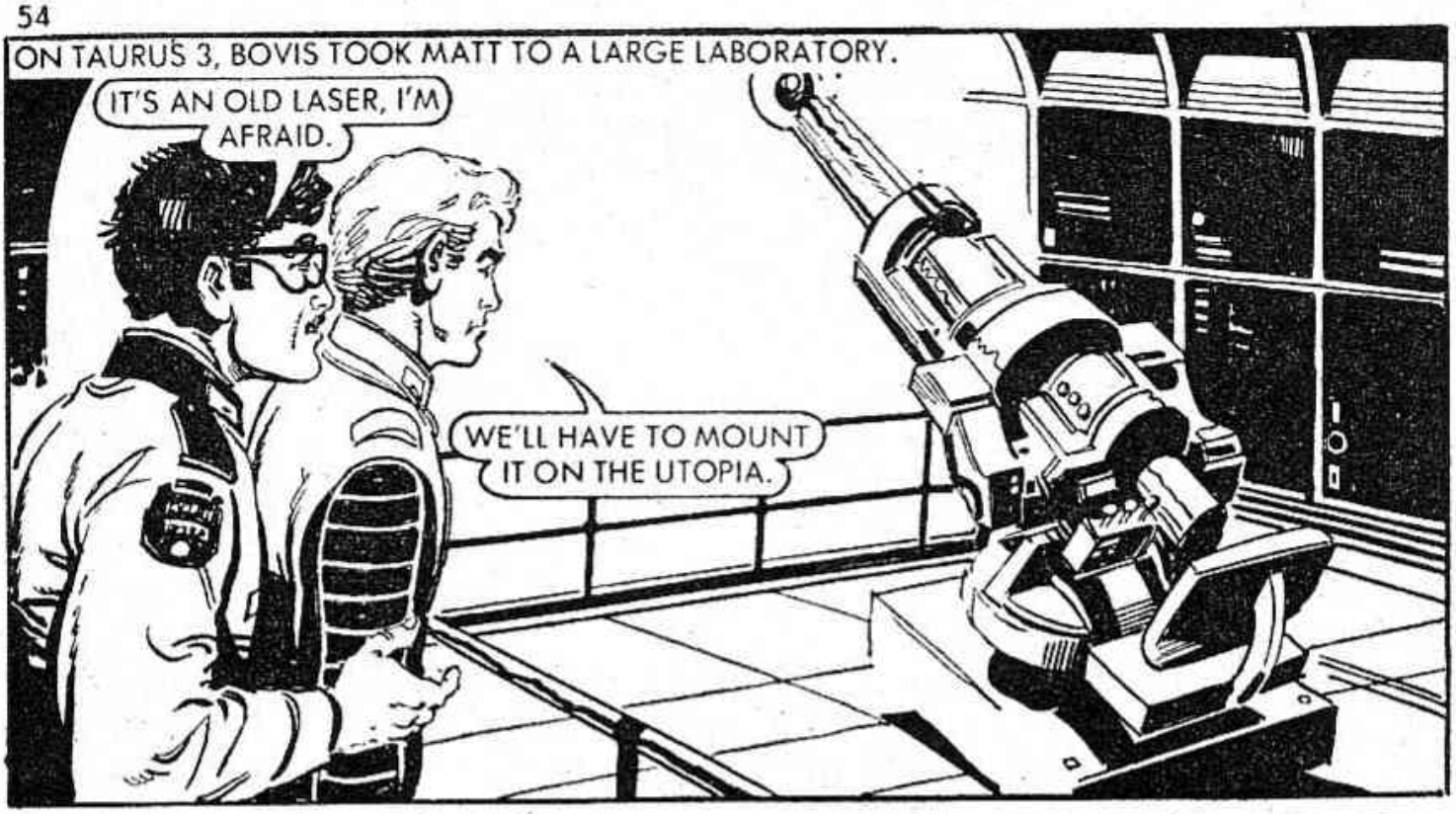

MATT LEAPED ON BOARD AS THE UTOPIA TOOK OFF.

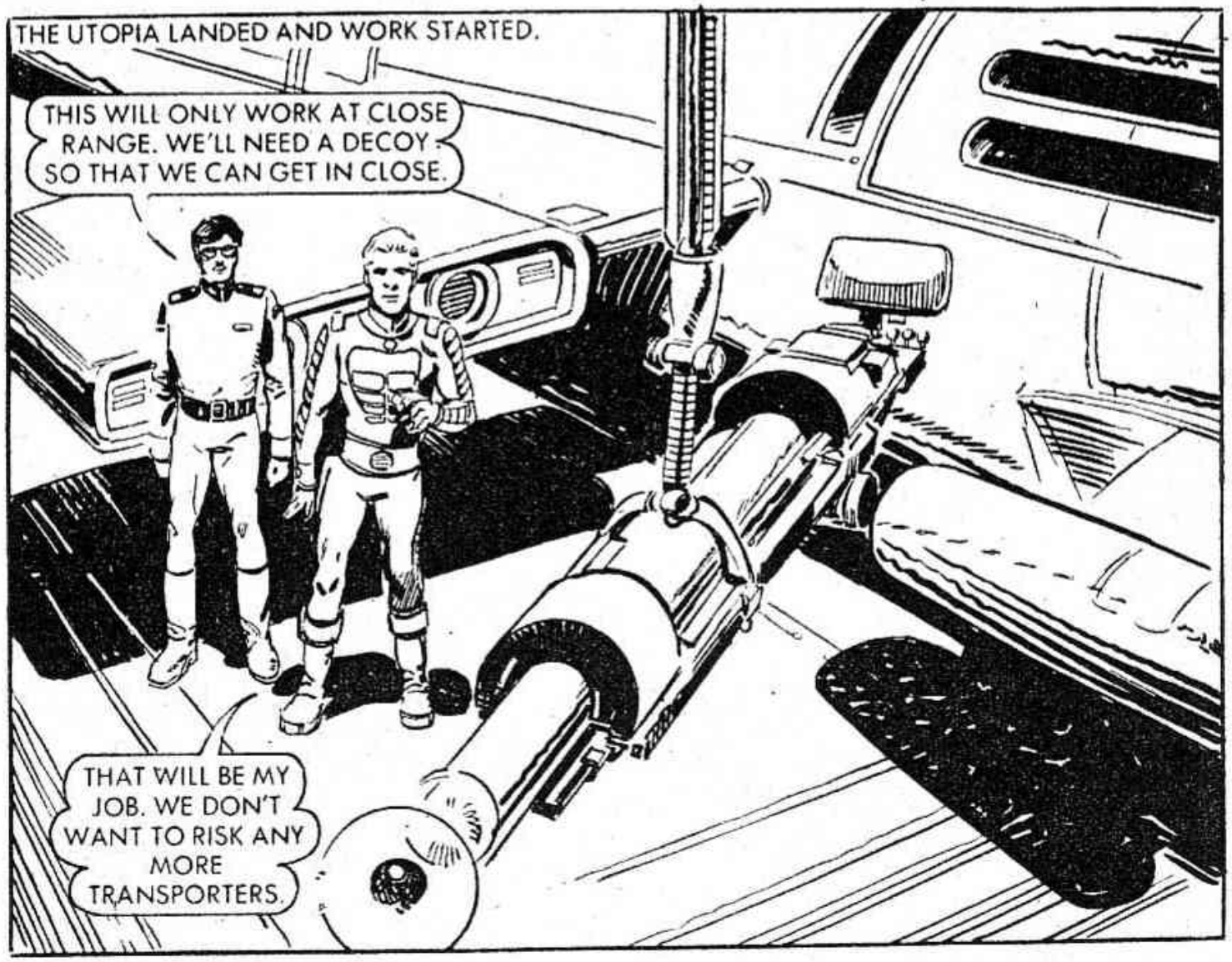

THE UTOPIA BLASTED BACK TOWARDS TAURUS 3.

ON BOARD MATT QUESTIONED BOVIS.
WHY DIDN'T YOU TELL US ABOUT THE DRAWNS?
THEY WERE TOP SECRET, IT ALL GOT OUT OF HAND. I WENT TO THAT PLANET, VETA . . . THAT'S WHERE THE DRAWN WAS BEING TESTED . . . I THOUGHT I COULD DO SOMETHING.

BEING TESTED! NOW IT'S OUT OF CONTROL. YOU WERE RUNNING AWAY.
IN A WAY YES! I CREATED THAT CREATURE. I NEVER THOUGHT IT WOULD KILL TO FEED ITSELF.

WELL, NOW IT HAS TO BE DESTROYED. BUT HOW?
I ENLARGED THE DRAWN USING NEGATIVE ELECTRONS, SO THE POSITIVE ELECTRONS OF A LASER WILL KILL IT. WE'VE GOT ONE AT TAURUS 3. I'LL SHOW YOU WHEN WE GET BACK.


ON TAURUS 3, BOVIS TOOK MATT TO A LARGE LABORATORY.
IT'S AN OLD LASER, I'M AFRAID.
WE'LL HAVE TO MOUNT IT ON THE UTOPIA.


THE UTOPIA LANDED AND WORK STARTED.
THIS WILL ONLY WORK AT CLOSE RANGE. WE'LL NEED A DECOY SO THAT WE CAN GET IN CLOSE.
THAT WILL BE MY JOB. WE DON'T WANT TO RISK ANY MORE TRANSPORTERS.

WHEN THE LASER WAS FITTED, UTOPIA BLASTED OFF.
THERE GOES THE UTOPIA. NOW TO FIX UP THAT DECOY.

RADIOACTIVE WASTE WAS LOADED ONTO A SHUTTLE.
I HOPE THIS WORKS.
AND ME I'M TO YOUNG TO DIE.

AS MATT TURNED TO LEAVE—
YES, YOU ARE. SORRY, CRANE! BUT I FIGURE I OWE EVERYBODY THIS.

BOVIS TOOK OFF IN THE DECOY SHIP.

UGH! WHAT HAPPENED. WHERE'S THE SHIP GONE?

MATT CONTACTED UTOPIA.
MIKE! BOVIS HAS TAKEN THE DECOY SHIP. BEAM ME BACK ON BOARD.
CLINK!

BACK ON THE UTOPIA, THEY TRACKED BOVIS.
WHAT IS HE PLAYING AT?
HE'S CRAZY.

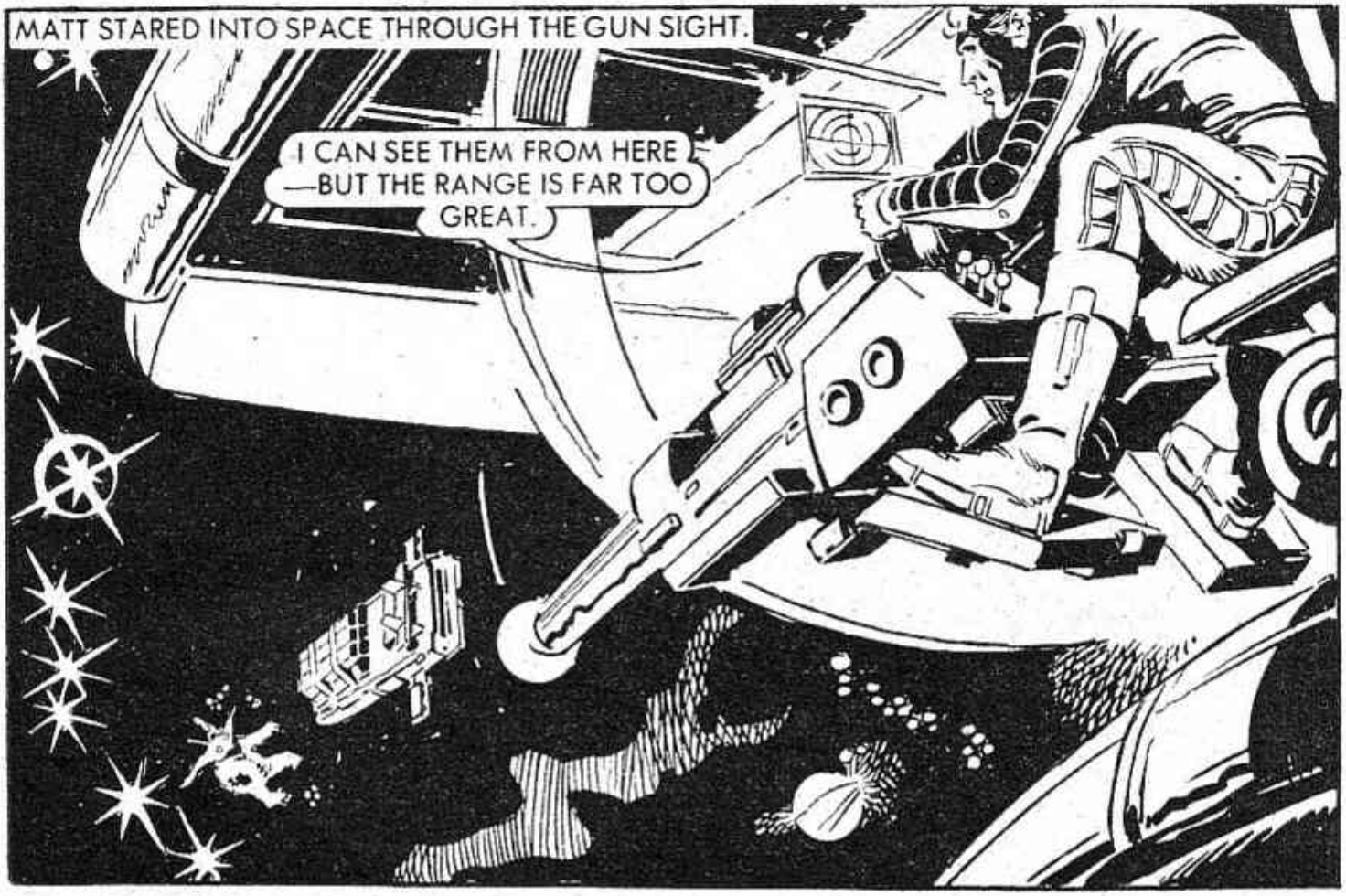
SIR! BOVIS IS TRYING TO COMMUNICATE.
OKAY! PUT HIM THROUGH!

CRANE! FOLLOW ME! I'LL LURE THE DRAWN AND GIVE YOU A GOOD SHOT AT IT. MAKE SURE YOU DON'T MISS.

BEFORE MATT COULD REPLY, THE SCREEN WENT BLANK.
THERE'S NO WAY OF STOPPING HIM NOW.

MATT! THERE'S ANOTHER BLIP ON THE SCREEN.
GET A PICTURE ON VIDEO—IT'LL BE THE DRAWN.

MIKE. I'M GOING UP TO THE LASER GUN. KEEP THE SHIP GOING STEADY.
GOOD SHOOTING, MATT.

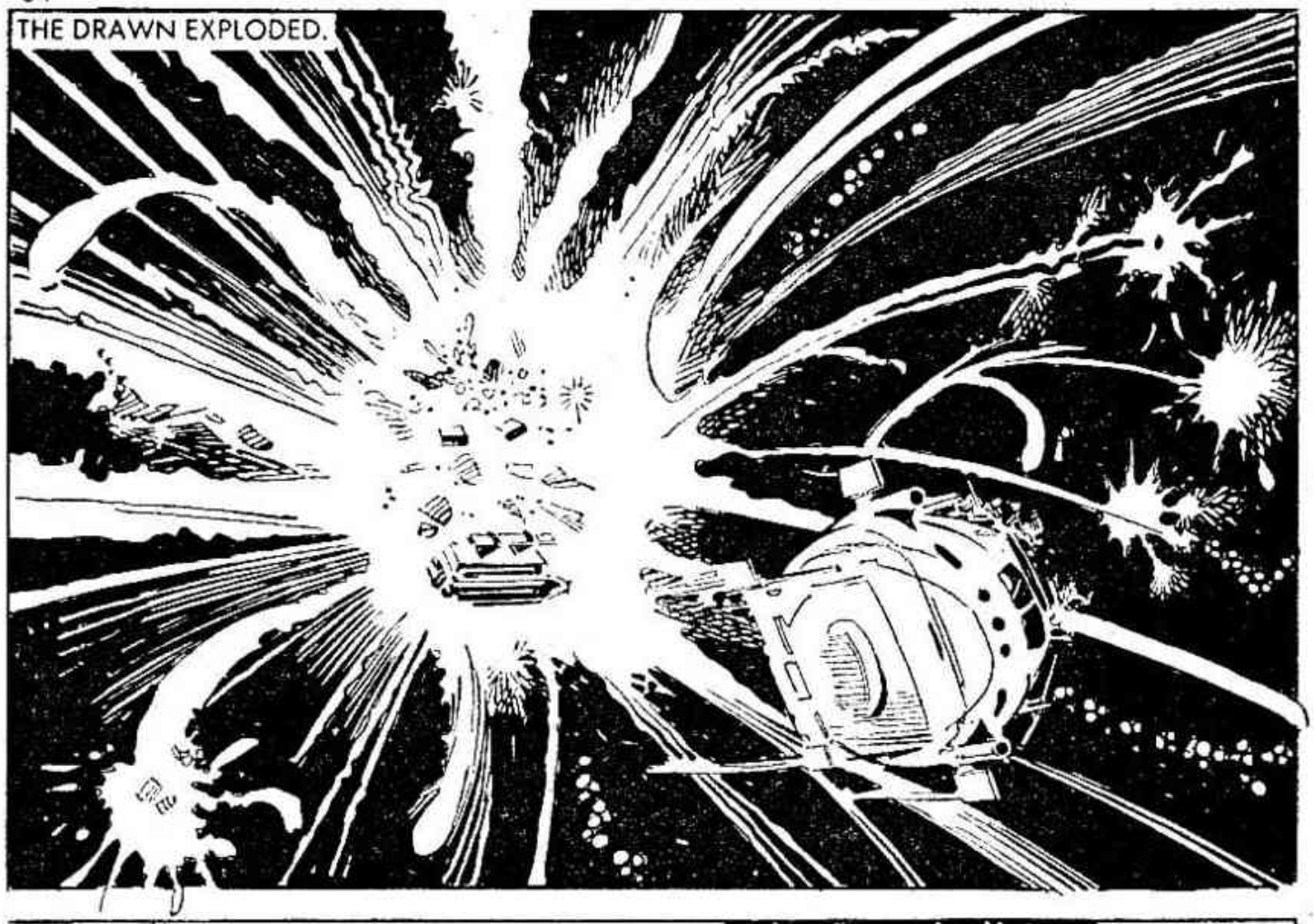

MATT STARED INTO SPACE THROUGH THE GUN SIGHT.
I CAN SEE THEM FROM HERE —BUT THE RANGE IS FAR TOO GREAT.

BOVIS! GET THAT SHIP OUT OF THE WAY! YOU'RE BETWEEN ME AND THE DRAWN.

I'M GOING TO HAVE TO SHOOT IN A MINUTE! IT'S ALMOST GOT BOVIS!

THERE'S NOTHING I CAN DO TO SAVE BOVIS. HERE GOES.

MATT WAS RIGHT ON TARGET.


THE DRAWN EXPLODED.

THERE'S NOT MUCH LEFT OF EITHER OF THEM.
BOVIS WAS A BRAVE MAN . . . FOOLISH, BUT BRAVE.

SUDDENLY, A MAYDAY CALL WAS SWITCHED THROUGH.
THIS IS CIRRUS III. HAVE LOST POWER. IN NO SERIOUS DANGER, BUT NEED A TOW! I AM ON STARLANE 7 . . . NEAR THE AQUARA INTERCHANGE.
THAT'S THE BUSIEST LANE IN SPACE!

PLOT A COURSE, MIKE! MAX WARP!
AYE, AYE, SKIPPER.

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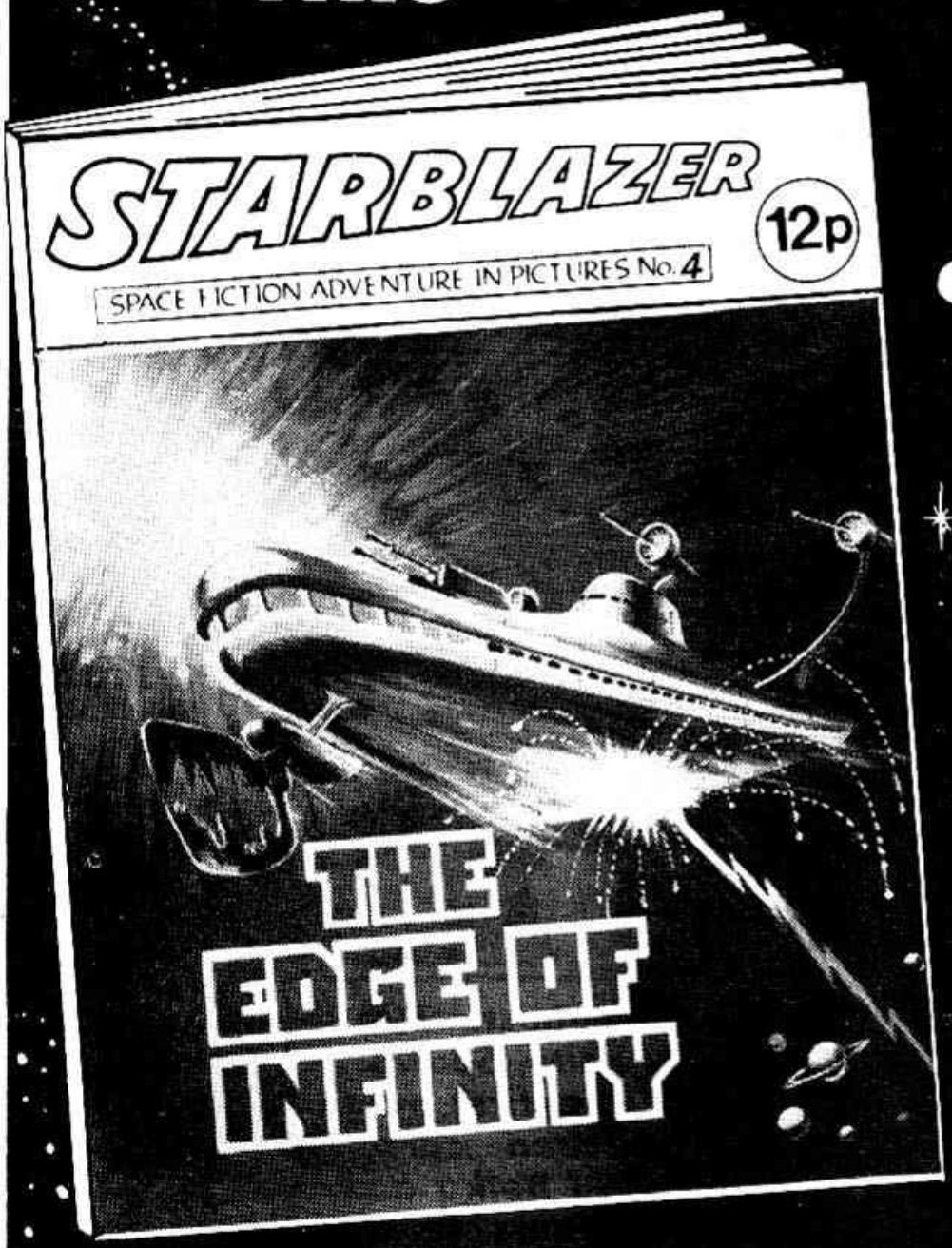
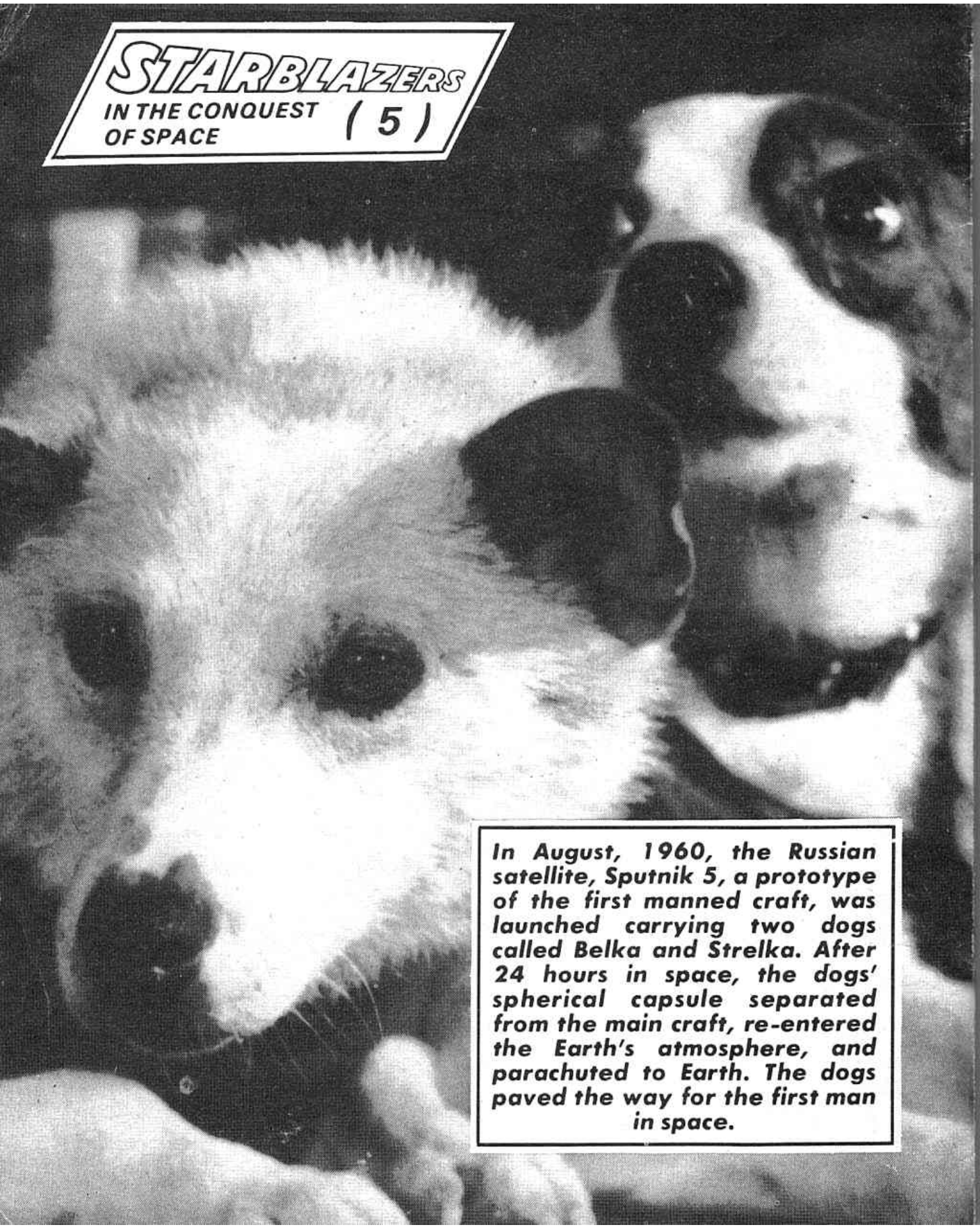
NOW THAT YOU'VE READ THIS



DON'T FORGET THAT THERE'S ANOTHER ONE THIS MONTH

IT'S ON SALE IN YOUR NEWSAGENT'S NOW!

STARBLAZERS
IN THE CONQUEST OF SPACE (5)



In August, 1960, the Russian satellite, Sputnik 5, a prototype of the first manned craft, was launched carrying two dogs called Belka and Strelka. After 24 hours in space, the dogs' spherical capsule separated from the main craft, re-entered the Earth's atmosphere, and parachuted to Earth. The dogs paved the way for the first man in space.